

# (Post)Colonial Tectonics

reflections on relations in Indigenous spatial practice between the  
Beautiful Waters and Willow River

by  
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### ***Author's Declaration***

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.







## *Abstract*

I find myself studying architecture in Cambridge, Ontario, a settler on lands stewarded by the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples for countless generations, on a tract following the Grand River (or Willow River) which was promised to the Six Nations. I came here from Toronto (or Tkaronto) - on the shores of Lake Ontario (or Beautiful Waters) - the territory of Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee communities throughout time, “purchased” by British settlers from the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The settler view of these two agreements, each covering vast swaths of territory, tends to obscure the nature of the Indigenous relationships to land which treaty-making was designed to protect. These erasures have been used to justify the colonial practices which architecture is embedded in, such as clear-cutting and urban sprawl, which disrupted and continue to disrupt reciprocal relationships to land in these places between the river and the lake.

This thesis is an attempt to move past passive understandings of these disruptions by actively reading this colonial milieu and recognizing the work Indigenous peoples are doing to renew these relations in urban areas. The work takes the form of a written collection of reflections, analyses, and speculations on an array of stories, gatherings, art pieces, and structures crafted by Indigenous leaders and in some cases supported by settler allies. Ranging in duration, the works I study creatively undermine imposed spatial orders by carefully constructing resurgent relations between community, culture, tradition, environment, and space. By engaging with these practices, I hope to begin a longer process of walking on, looking at, and designing in these places in a better way.

## *Acknowledgments*

I would like to first acknowledge the lands, and all that they host, which I wrote about in this thesis without permission and to which I am just learning to relate. First, the minerals which we stand on, and now make our homes and malls with, and which flow through our bodies and waters. The waters which long ago carved out this terrain, which sustain all manner of life, and which soak up our misbehaviors but may not be able to for much longer. The plants and trees, which nourish and protect us animals. Finally, to the stewards who lived in reciprocity with these lands since time immemorial. The accommodating hosts who first taught settlers how to survive here only to survive a litany of abuses at the hands of their guests. They are still here, still taking care of the lands, and, in spite of history, still graciously sharing their knowledge.

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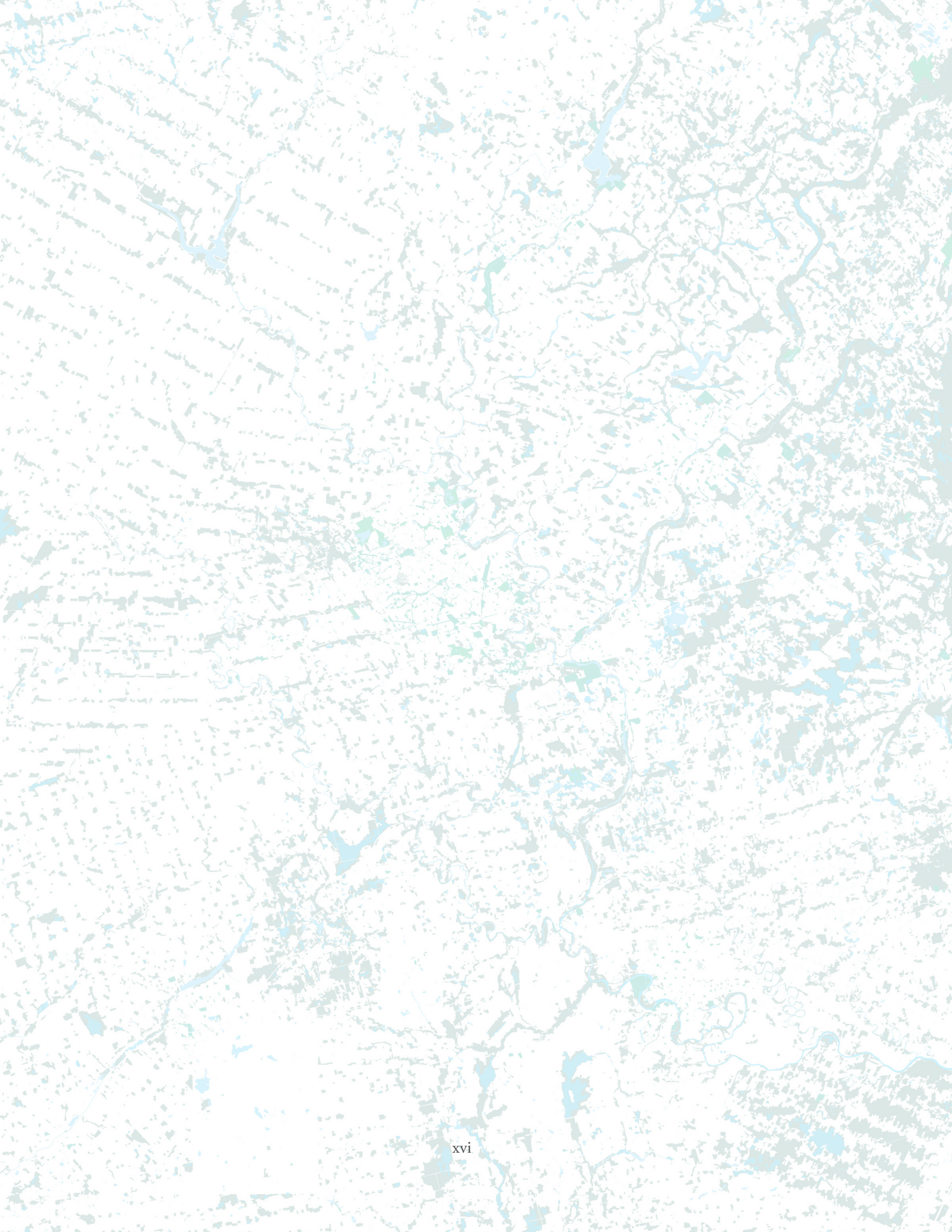
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An aerial photograph of a coastal region. A large, irregularly shaped body of water, likely a bay or estuary, occupies the central and right portions of the image. The surrounding land is a mosaic of green fields, brown patches, and a network of roads and rivers. The word "Introduction" is printed in a bold, italicized serif font in the upper left quadrant.

# ***Introduction***



figure 1.1 Student singers  
activating the Hoop Dance  
Pavilion and central hearth.  
Still from author's video.



## *Motivation and Trajectory*

My motivations for engaging with Indigineity and the city are alternately simple and complex, personal and professional. It is perhaps easiest to start where my interest began, at the Mohawk College campus in the summer of 2016, a few months into an internship at Brook McIlroy, a multidisciplinary design firm in Toronto. On a late July day I had the opportunity to act as entourage for the photography of their recently completed Hoop Dance Pavilion.

I traveled to Hamilton with the project manager, my fellow intern, and met the photographer for a day of drone flyovers and the kind of staged shots typical to architecture publications. We moved logs, arranged pebbles painted by the local community, and posed as students using the space: a landscape project in the heart of the campus, defined by a ring of impressive timber columns and flanked by gravel beds and traditional gardens. Near the end of the day, we were introduced to three students at the college who were going to help round out the session. They were Anishinaabeg speakers invited to demonstrate the ceremonial utility of the space for the photographer. We commiserated about the upcoming fall term, and spoke tiredly about our areas of study. As the sun set, they lit a fire in the central stone pit, warmed their hide drums, and began to sing in Anishinaabemowin. As they shared their songs with us, I felt an immense gratitude to the singers for allowing us to share this intimate moment as day turned to dusk. Their familiar academic languor had given way to a certain vitality, the three young men energized by their years of practice and connection to the language.

On the ride home, I reflected on my luck and began to consider what I'd seen. This was a year before the Canada 150 celebrations and not long after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its report on Canada's Residential Schools.<sup>1</sup> I read articles questioning these celebrations in light of this dark history, and felt a vague call to these issues as a millennial "progressive", but ultimately my conception of and experience with Indigenous peoples was limited to harmful generalization and racist myth. They were either a noble people lost to time and briefly mentioned in museums, or a troubled minority class beset by poverty and social ills as reported on in popular media. That day I met real people who, in spite of the weight of history and assimilationist tactics, lived contemporary lives while practicing a connection to their songs, their ancestors, and the land. I was witness to song in a language which was meant to be

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1 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg, 2015), V.

destroyed,<sup>2</sup> at the heart of a colonially-tinged college campus, in a space imagined, designed, and built by a coalition of Indigenous and settler people.<sup>3</sup> Officially, the project “underscores the importance of Indigenous placemaking as an agent of Reconciliation,”<sup>4</sup> but this experience sparked an interest in the layering of space and the social context of the land we live and work on inside of settler nations.

This thread reemerged as I geared up to start my thesis year. As I considered researching sustainability, affordability, accessibility, or any number of other problems facing North American cities, a complex feeling of hesitation nagged at me. At the time, land acknowledgments were becoming a more common practice in Canadian institutions. I struggled with these vague sentiments of recognition in light of the damage that I was beginning to understand settler society had wrought on Indigenous lands and people.<sup>5</sup> I now know that this hesitation was an inkling of comprehension of the relationship between settler culture, Indigenous dispossession, environmental crisis, and spatial injustice. Indeed, even topics such as housing access can be traced back to development regimes and property models which were critical to and informed by the colonization of Turtle Island. In addition to this, I began to question the ethics of doing design in a context, country, or city built on the exploitation and Indigenous land and labour. Reading “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” exposed me to the colonial politics at play in movements as seemingly progressive as Occupy, and the “unsettling” nature of decolonization on a tangible, material level.<sup>6</sup> As a kind of double settler, born to Russian parents in the contested lands of Israel, could I manage my growing discomfort with working in this fraught context by contributing to some kind of subversive or restorative project?

Inspired by former Waterloo students Kat Kovalcik and Amrit Phull, who visited with and respectfully wrote about remote Indigenous communities, I considered the possibility of bringing this kind of work to a more central urban setting. After all, cities like Toronto are traditional territories as much as

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2 TRCC, “Honoring the Truth,” 3.

3 Brook McIlroy, “HOOP Dance Gathering Place / Brook McIlroy | ArchDaily,” (ArchDaily, 2019), <https://www.archdaily.com/907647/hoop-dance-gathering-place-brook-mcilroy>.

4 Brook McIlroy, “Hoop Dance.”

5 CBC Radio. “I Regret It’: Hayden King on Writing Ryerson University’s Territorial Acknowledgement.” CBC Unreserved, June 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/redrawing-the-lines-1.4973363/i-regret-it-hayden-king-on-writing-ryerson-university-s-territorial-acknowledgement-1.4973371>.

6 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012): 7.

James Bay or Old Crow. The resulting thesis process followed an uneven and meandering trajectory.

At the beginning of my thesis year, I wondered if colonial relations and ideas of property in settler colonial cities such as Toronto could be challenged through the creation of radically “Indigenous” spaces. I spent the first half of that term trying to understand and categorize existing challenges to that order, such as art projects and built structures. I hoped to work closely with a community of some form in order to explore a design project, the scope of which would be determined collaboratively. Based on critical writings in postcolonial and Indigenous studies, as well as faculty feedback, however, I ultimately shifted away from the language of “decolonization”. Bandyng the term about as a settler without a serious consideration of how “land back”<sup>7</sup> might look in a city as dense and complex as Toronto felt like an empty “move to innocence.”<sup>8</sup> I re-framed my research towards an idea of urban Indigenous community building, and specifically considered how to support existing cultural initiatives. This involved spatial, temporal, and thematic mapping of Indigenous presence in Toronto (fig.1.2), focused on Indigenous-led organizations already active in Toronto. This research was supplemented by more detailed analyses of key organizations which focused on culture or re-building relationships to land.

At this point, I faced a few critical questions that I did not yet feel comfortable answering. If my work was to be culturally appropriate and avoid a flattening “pan-Indigenous” perspective, I might have to focus on one of Toronto’s specific cultural or language groups. As an outsider relatively new to the conversation, how might I choose which people, culture, or experience to privilege? How might I embed myself in such an organization, without repeating familiar patterns of extractive settler academic research and harm?

As I considered these questions, two formative experiences played out in the background. On the academic end, I was fortunate enough to participate in Dr. Janice Barry’s graduate elective in Waterloo’s planning department, *Indigenous Peoples and Community Planning*. Dr. Barry is a settler, professional planner, and scholar with practical community experience and deep research interests in

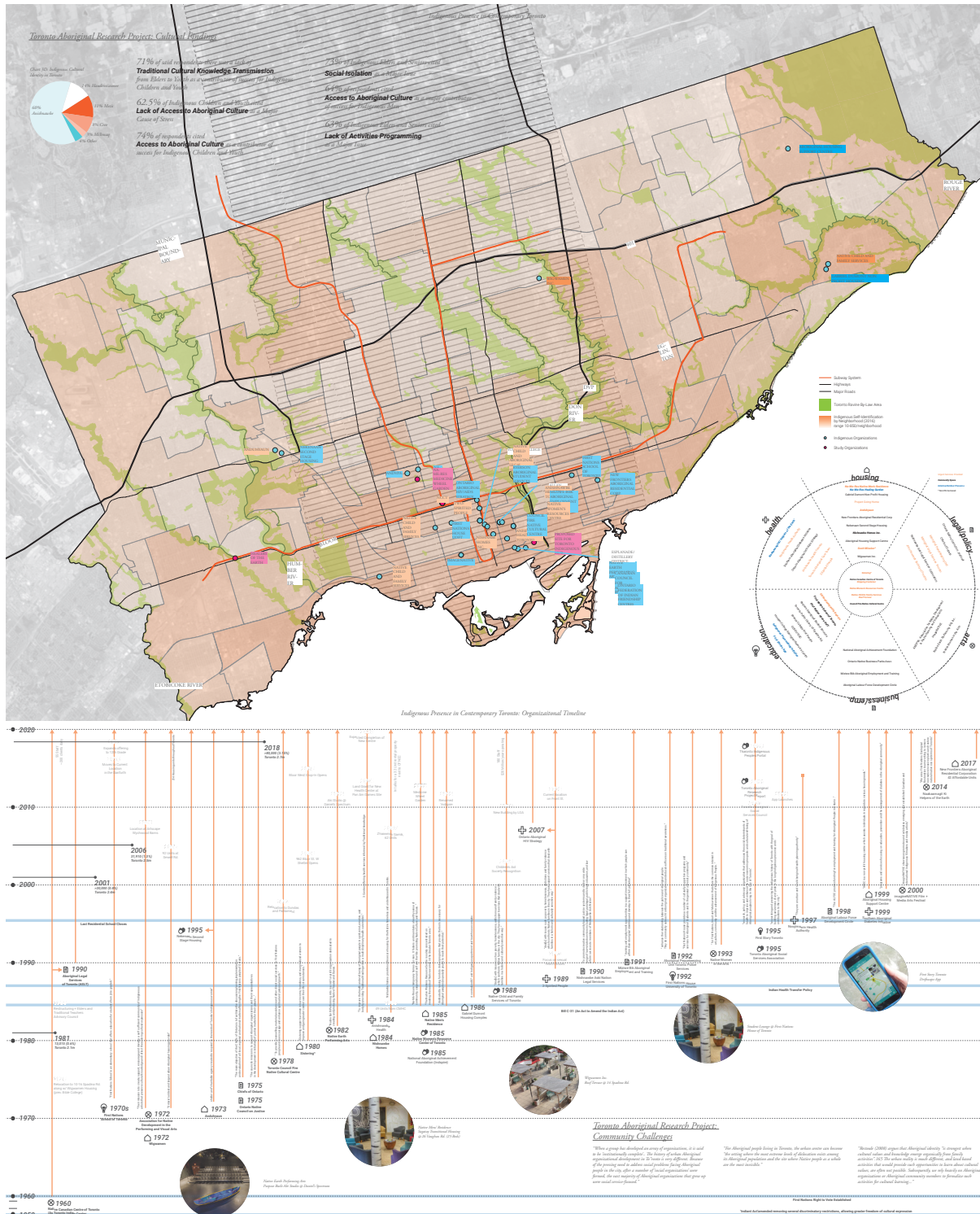
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7 Land back is a popular shorthand in Indigenous political organizing referring to real repatriation of traditional land of Indigenous communities and First Nations. For a legally-oriented discussion of the term, see Hayden King and Shiri Pasternak, “Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper.” (Yellowhead Institute, Toronto, 2019).

8 Tuck, and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor”, 10.

## (Post)Colonial Tectonics

figure 1.2 Author's diagram of contemporary Indigenous organizational presence in Toronto.



how planning as a profession interacts with, and often counteracts, the ambitions and aspirations of Indigenous communities in settler colonial states. Her course offered an excellent primer into planning's ideological constructs, complicity in the project of settler colonial expansion, and potential to facilitate emancipatory work for Indigenous communities. The course exposed me to critical frameworks for understanding how settler epistemologies, research methods, and world views forms the way designers work<sup>9</sup>. Despite presenting us with past failures from settler planning professionals and researchers, Dr. Barry made sure to highlight positive contemporary examples. In these cases, good work largely arose from slow, intentional, and respectful relationship building between professionals (or researchers) and the communities they worked with. These examples were heartening, but also suggested that my interest in community-based work and the solitary, bounded nature of the thesis program might have been at odds.

At the same time, my classmates and I were unknowingly starting a community engagement project of our own. Working as BRIDGE Centre for Architecture + Design (BRIDGE), three colleagues and I were asked to collaboratively envision and curate a summer arts program for Cambridge Art Galleries (CAG). As an organization, CAG was looking for programming that pushed beyond staid gallery conventions, confronted meaningful contemporary issues, and engaged in some form with Indigenous artists and leaders. Brainstorming between CAG, the BRIDGE directors, and the larger student body, we landed on an exhibition which would look at *Common Waters*, which we framed as “a discussion on community and the environment.”<sup>10</sup> We crafted a call for proposals which sought out diverse events and artifacts which explored the cultural, technical, urgent, personal, and designed aspects of water. The nearby Grand River gave us an important context that was central to this discussion. Its watershed is a traditional territory to many people, and this tract was promised to the Six Nations of the Grand River. This context spurred an engagement with Indigenous artists and activists which ended up being one of the most impactful aspects of the exhibition.

Among the variety of contributors, we were lucky to hear from a diverse group of Indigenous leaders working to heal relationships to the water, and the broader environment. Christine Lefebvre, a local Métis and Mohawk teacher and helper, opened and closed the exhibition with teachings on the sacredness of

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9 Janice Barry, “Special Topics in Planning: Indigenous Peoples and Community Planning,” (Waterloo University of Waterloo, 2019).

10 Idea Exchange and BRIDGE, “Common Waters,” (Cambridge, Idea Exchange, 2019), <https://ideaexchange.org/art/exhibition/common-waters>.

water, the Indigenous peoples of the area, how their relationships to the land had been disturbed, and how we might move forward. Ellie Joseph, a Mohawk public school teacher, spoke in tandem with Jay Bailey, a settler ‘voyageur’, about their work organizing Two Row on the Grand, an annual paddle from Cambridge to the Six Nations Reserve. They described how this two-week trek, open to both Indigenous and settler paddlers of all levels, encouraged participants to reconnect with the Two Row Wampum, a founding agreement for healthy relations between settler and Indigenous communities dating back to Haudenosaunee contact with Dutch colonists in 17th century New York. We also heard from Mary Anne Caibaiosai and Waasekom Niin, Anishinaabe writers, speakers, and activists, on their work organizing and walking the All Nations Grand River Water Walk. Speaking to one of our largest audiences, they shared their intentions for and experiences on the walk, a spiritual and political practice with deep traditional roots. Dr. Andrew Judge, an Anishinaabe professor of Indigenous Studies at Conestoga College, became an integral contributor to the entire event and advised us on how to respectfully go about this work from the planning stages. Over the course of the exhibit, Andrew gave a talk on the centrality of water in Anishinaabe ways of life, world views, and spirituality, and hosted one of our closing events. This “Harvesting Ceremony” took place at Minjimendan, an Indigenous food and medicine garden Andrew had been cultivating for two years prior, and saw talks from Christine, Andrew, as well as Don Russell, a Mi’kmaq artist and fire-keeper, and Dr. Bill Woodworth, a Mohawk architect and adjunct professor at Waterloo. The brief descriptions here only hint at the complexity and depth of insights shared by each of these figures, and together they represent a diverse set of questions and concerns broached about the water and the land. These figures also presented a broad range of work and organizing around these issues, from paddling, to planting, to simply walking together.

During most of this process, I considered the exhibition as something entirely separate from my thesis work. That summer I was focused on structuring a kind of meta-analysis of how settler architects interact with Indigenous communities and clients, in the vein of the research into planning I was exposed to in Dr. Barry’s planning elective. My thinking through those issues was stalled by recurring questions around whose voices I was centering in my research, and if I had enough context, or experience, to thoroughly evaluate my planned case studies. Eventually I came to see *Common Waters* as part of my research, as it exposed me to new people, ideas, practices, and ways of engaging with space. Given that the contributors listed above were, in their own ways, attempting to recover or strengthen healthy relationships to land, it is unsurprising that their methods were all spatial in some form. My earlier



research lingered in the background of these talks, but explicitly connecting these points encouraged me to critically explore what I had witnessed over the summer and read about in the year prior. Was there a conceptual framework which would allow me to reflect on and highlight the spatial power of these projects, events, and practices?

During the defense of this thesis, David Fortin, a Métis architect and scholar, asked me to clarify who the audience of the work was, especially as it relates to concepts of reciprocity. While this was a question I had been considering throughout the process, I was no closer to a satisfying answer. Ultimately, the audience for this study is myself and other settler designers. Without centering myself in the work, my writing attempts to make clear that I was approaching these practices as an un-objective individual with an outsider background. As such, I had no pretense of making novel or useful insights for the Indigenous designers, leaders, and communities at the helm of the projects which I studied. I can say with confidence, however, that the act of writing this work was personally illuminating. If there is anything for other researchers and designers to take away it is the extraordinary power and intelligence of the projects which employ what I call (post)colonial tectonics, as well as the potential value of an intentionally subjective and personal entanglement with these kinds of issues. If there is anything I hope to offer back, it is continued and practical support for the leaders I had the privilege of meeting along the way.

While the work in this book does not mirror the specific interests and outcomes I initially had in mind, my path led me to a richer context with its own set of lessons. Over time I have come to appreciate this as an echo of the idea that “good” research by or for Indigenous people “emerges” from and is oriented around process and relationality as opposed to results or outcomes<sup>11</sup>.

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11 Lori Campbell, “Indigenous Research Methods,” (Cambridge: University of Waterloo, 2019.)



figure 1.3 Common Waters promotional image featuring an abstracted intersection of the Grand River and Speed River in Cambridge. Image by author and Julia Nakanishi.





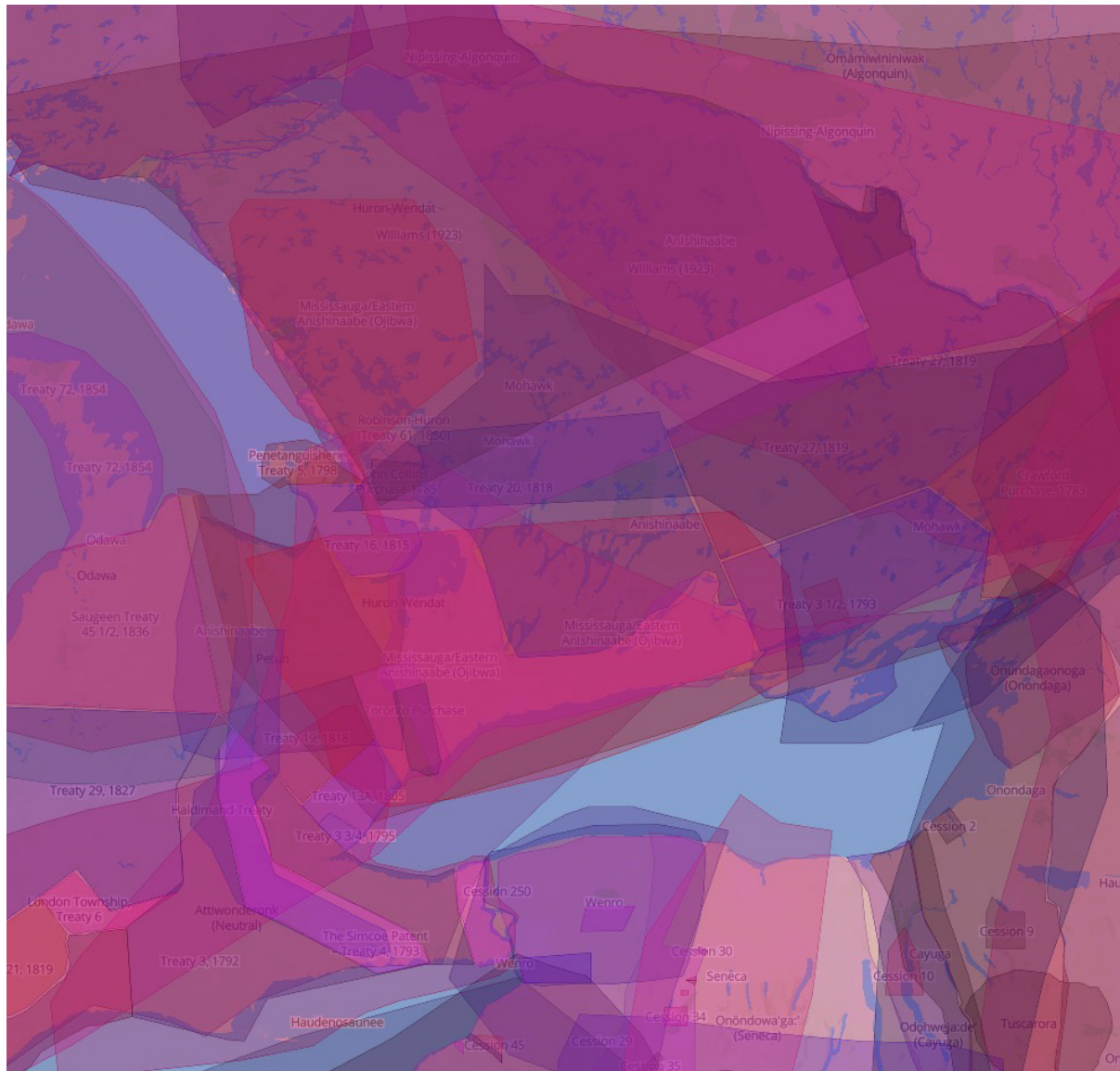


figure 1.4 Territories, Languages, and Treaties of the Great Lakes region. Image via Native Land.

## *Places*

“ Indeed, the settler colonial city has often been viewed by colonizers and colonized alike as the “consummation of empire.”... Cities have been seen as the “ultimate avatars of . . . progress, representing the pinnacle of technology, commerce, and cultural sophistication,” at the same time as they have obliterated the Indigenous landscape of the past.”

- Victoria Freeman<sup>12</sup>

I locate this thesis in a highly urbanized corner of Turtle Island, or North America: the lands between Grand River (or Willow River) and Lake Ontario (or Beautiful Waters),<sup>13,14</sup> a small part of a continent home to hundreds of distinct peoples, languages, and nations. Each of these cultures have particular relationships to the diverse biophysical regions of the continent, which have all been impacted to varying extent by the tools, policies, and effects of European settlement. These external forces, too, ranged in their intents and ambitions across time and space. Historian J.R. Miller, focusing on what is currently called Canada, describes the varied nature of interactions between Indigenous peoples and settlers; from cautious cooperation, to violence and dispossession, to state-sponsored attempts at assimilation and genocide.<sup>15</sup> Describing these different points of contact, not to mention peoples and nations, in general terms has limited usefulness. Each story is influenced by particular physical factors and historical moments: while the mercantile relations in beaver hunting grounds, for example, were guided by a specific economic activity, these same regions saw the development of domineering settler attitudes as that resource base was depleted.

Also called the Golden Horseshoe, or the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, this area between the River and the Lake is one of Canada’s major industrial and population centres. This passive reading

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12 Freeman, Victoria. “toronto Has No History!” *Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, and Historical Memory in Canada’s Largest City*. *Urban History Review* 38 (March 1, 2010): 21.

13 MacGregor, Roy. “Grand River: A Waterway’s Rise to Its Former Greatness.” *The Globe and Mail*, May 16, 2018. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/grand-river-a-waterways-rise-to-its-former-greatness/article27890648/>.

14 Woodworth Raweno:kwas, William. “Iroquoian Condolence Practised on a Civic Scale.” In *Alliances : Re/Envisioning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships*, edited by Lynne Davis, 25–56, 2010. 27.

15 Miller, J. R. *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Native-Newcomer Relations in Canada*, Fourth Edition. University of Toronto Press, 2018.

obscures the traditional and contemporary Indigenous context of this place, as well as the violence underpinning this economic success. Toronto, like most Canadian cities, was generally developed through less than reciprocal means. Indigenous inhabitants were displaced from and dispossessed of their lands, often violently, to serve settler interests. As historian Victoria Freeman and others describe, cities like Toronto were centres of the military, political, and financial power critical to securing and expanding colonial presence more broadly.<sup>16</sup> Freeman also explains how the city required a literal and symbolic erasure of Indigenous presence and claims to space.<sup>17</sup> In the lands in and around Toronto, this erasure started with decimation of Indigenous populations due to foreign diseases.<sup>18</sup> This pattern continued with the imposition of spatial infrastructures onto the land: surveys, plats, and railways in particular relied on and facilitated violence against Indigenous communities across Turtle Island.<sup>19</sup> The often overlapping relationships of the Mississaugas, Wendat, and Haudenosaunee peoples to these places were also essentially flattened through agreements like the Toronto Purchase (fig. 1.6), which saw settler powers in negotiation with only the Mississaugas. Similarly, the Haldimand Tract (1.8), the land promised to the Six Nations by the British based on prior military alliances, was secured through negotiations with the Mississaugas and the obscuring of earlier Wendat inhabitation.

The region's colonial roots have reverberating impacts on its contemporary Indigenous population. The area now referred to as Toronto has a long and varied pre-European history. This story is the subject of oral histories, books, and essays, and is constantly being amended and refined. Recounting the complex arc of inhabitation and travel through this region is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to mention it when discussing a possible future. While land acknowledgments are a problematic genre, surveying more thorough examples from smaller institutions offers a useful summary of Toronto's indigenous history.<sup>20</sup> Generally, there is a consensus that several nations, including the Huron-Wendat, Petun, Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River, have had a territorial relationship to the area

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16 Freeman, "toronto Has No History!" 21.

17 Robert Dixon, quoted in Edmonds, "From Bedlam to Incorporation," quoted in Freeman, "toronto Has No History!", 21,

18 Smith, *Sacred Feathers*. 30.

19 Cowen, Deborah. "#shutcanadadown: Anti-Colonial Counterlogistics for Indigenous Sovereignty." *The Funambulist* 28 (2020): 2–4. 4.

20 Marche, Stephen. "Canada's Impossible Acknowledgment." *The New Yorker*, *The New Yorker*, 7 Sept. 2017, [www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/canadas-impossible-acknowledgment](http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/canadas-impossible-acknowledgment).

over time.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, there is agreement that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Ojibwe and allied nations entered into a covenant, called 'The Dish with One Spoon Wampum', concerning the stewardship and sharing of lands including what we now call 'Toronto' predating European colonization. To emphasize the evolving nature of this history, it is worth noting as an example that the dating and scope of this treaty are still the subject of current interpretation and debate.<sup>22</sup> The area played host to thousands of British Loyalists fleeing the American Revolutionary War and ended up having geopolitical importance to the British for its ideal proximity to the United States and location between two other prominent colonial settlements.<sup>23</sup> Before any treaty or purchase, new layers of military strategy and colonial permanence were being imposed on an ancestral place of shared care-taking. This new conception of the area was formalized in the Toronto Purchase, an agreement which saw the British offer petty cash, hunting supplies, and some liquor to the Mississaugas of New Credit in exchange for land rights to what is roughly now defined as Toronto and York Region.<sup>24</sup> One problem raised with these kinds of purchases and treaties is that an equitable agreement is impossible between parties with such a power imbalance.<sup>25</sup>

The Mississaugas understood the agreement not as a purchase but as a contract allowing for British inhabitation with continued remuneration.<sup>26</sup> This confusion is a symptom of the Colonial imposition of a European world-view. The British assumed a relationship to the ground which probably did not exist in 'Canada' prior to European Arrival: it is one of defined boundaries, complete ownership, and resource extraction<sup>27</sup>. The Dish with One Spoon Wampum (fig. 1.5) illustrates how foreign this relationship is. It is an agreement to a loosely bound collection of lands between multiple parties with one of its principle aims being proper stewardship of the land. This is not to say that pre-contact relations were free of conflict or territoriality, but the example does speak to a conception of territory which is in opposition

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21 Ito, Ren. "Territorial Acknowledgements." Toronto Conference, [torontoconference.ca/right-relations/territorial-acknowledgements/](http://torontoconference.ca/right-relations/territorial-acknowledgements/).

22 Lytwyn, Victor P. "A Dish with One Spoon." Papers of the Twenty-Eighth Algonquian Conference, 1997.

23 Smith, 24.

24 Smith, 26.

25 McCallum, Andrea Gaye. "Dispute Resolution Mechanism in the Resolution of Comprehensive Aboriginal Claims." Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law, vol. 2, no. 1, 1995.

26 Smith, 26.

27 Thom, Brian. "Reframing Indigenous Territories: Private Property, Human Rights and Overlapping Claims." American Indian Culture and Research Journal, vol. 38, no. 4, 2014, pp. 3–28.



figure 1.5 Replica of the Dish with One Spoon wampum belt. Image via Richard Hamell and Ansley Jemison.

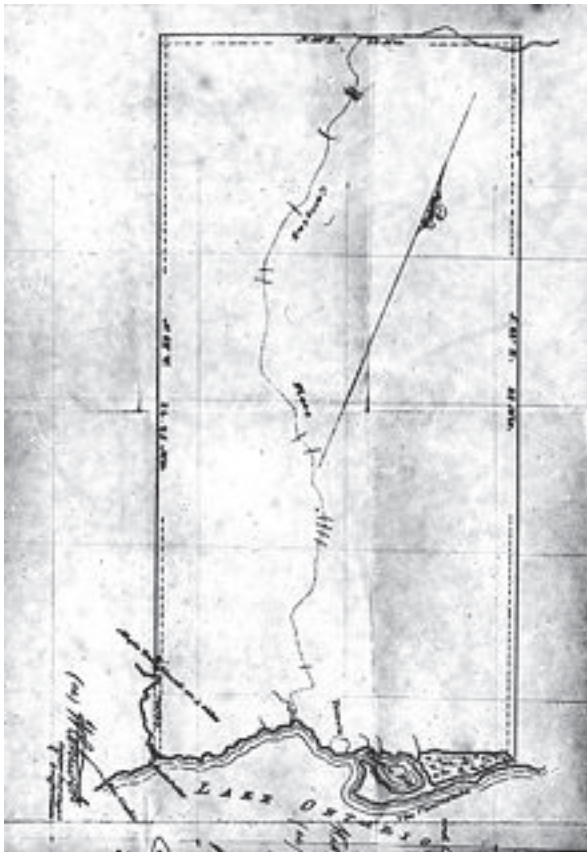


figure 1.6 "The descriptive plan of the Toronto Purchase made 23 of September 1787 and Completed on the 1st day of August 1805." Image via City of Toronto Archives.



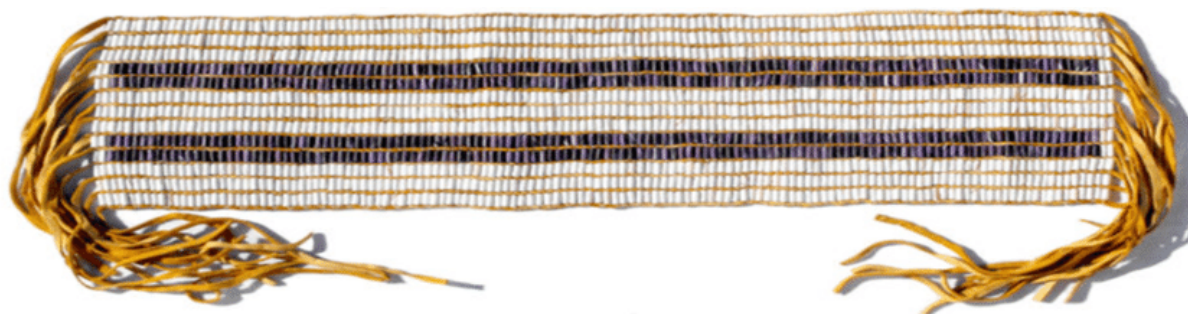


figure 1.7 Replica of the Two Row wampum belt. Image via Darren Bonaparte.

figure 1.8 Thomas Ridout map of the Grand River Indian Lands, 1821. Image via Public Archives of Canada.



to the possibility of an outright purchase of land. The artifacts used to describe the Dish with one Spoon Wampum, and the Two Row Wampum (fig. 1.7) like it, make no specific reference to place and serve as powerful metaphors for relationships to other peoples. This is unlike the corresponding treaties and tracts which are based on an empirical, cartesian understanding of space instead of natural features. This obscures relations and smooths out ecological specifics, by averaging the shoreline or the rivers curve for example.

These agreements and treaties allowed for massive influxes of settlers to the region, as well as the decimation of traditional food sources through over-harvesting and large-scale ecological disruption. Feeding the area's newfound population through European agricultural methods and connecting the area with roads required wetland drainage and clear-cutting at unimaginable scales.<sup>28</sup> This made a shared stewardship impossible, as critical staples such as wild rice and salmon disappeared along with their associated cultures and practices.<sup>29</sup> This sort of extractive behaviour persists today, with the construction and operation of the region's new building stock requiring consistent and significant resource extraction from the land, as well as continued forest and wetland clearing for subdivision development. Additionally, the parcellation of urban and peri-urban space into well-policed and built-up private property ensures that a close relationships to the land remain difficult, though not impossible, to practice.

Today, the region is host to a growing Indigenous population. This includes Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River members living on and off reserve, as well as diverse Indigenous peoples from across Canada displaced through colonization. In trying to understand urban Indigenous presence in Toronto and the region, it is important to acknowledge that this is not a monolithic demographic. While there is a cultural and linguistic majority of Anishinaabe people, the region also plays host to people identifying as Haudenosaunee, Cree, Mi'kmaq, Inuit, and Métis.<sup>30</sup> This diversity also applies in socioeconomic terms, in contrast to the often bleak popular perceptions and statistics surrounding urban Indigenous people. In the City of Toronto, for example, the Toronto

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28 Johnson, Lorraine. *The Natural Treasures of Carolinian Canada: Discovering the Rich Natural Diversity of Ontario's Southern Heartland*, Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2007. 13.

29 Ferrier, Jonathan. "Food Medicine and Material Security in MCFN Territory." New Credit: MCFN, 2020.

30 McCaskill, FitzMaurice, Cidro. "The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) Final Report." Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council, 2011.



Aboriginal Research Project found that Toronto is home to similar numbers of “economically successful” Indigenous people and those with a sub-\$20,000 yearly income.<sup>31</sup> Of Toronto’s estimated 70,000 Indigenous people, nearly a third are precariously housed or experiencing homelessness<sup>32,33</sup>. These statistics, coupled with the identification of social/material exclusion and “detachment from cultural identity” as key factors in shaping Indigenous homelessness in Canada, illustrate how the contemporary city marginalizes this population.

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31 McCaskill et. al, “TARP”.

32 Rotondi, Michael A, et al. “Our Health Counts Toronto: Using Respondent-Driven Sampling to Unmask Census Undercounts of an Urban Indigenous Population in Toronto, Canada.” *BMJ Open*, vol. 7, no. 12, 2017, doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2017-018936.

33 Keung, Nicholas. “Report Says Indigenous People in Toronto Are Far More Likely to Be Homeless, Unemployed and Hungry.” *Thestar.com*, Toronto Star, 28 Feb. 2018, [www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/02/28/report-says-indigenous-people-in-toronto-are-far-more-likely-to-be-homeless-unemployed-and-hungry.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/02/28/report-says-indigenous-people-in-toronto-are-far-more-likely-to-be-homeless-unemployed-and-hungry.html).



## *Theories*

While the geographic breadth of this thesis is relatively contained, an international and cross-disciplinary set of discourses informed my analysis. European imperialism, global in scope, colonized a vast array of Indigenous peoples. This diverse sphere shares an increasingly international language and understanding of common experiences and struggles under colonial rule. Contemporary Dene political scholar Glen Coulthard, for example, writes about Indigenous-state relations in Canada with direct reference to Frantz Fanon's seminal *Black Skin, White Masks*, a text about blackness and colonialism in Africa written by a trained psychiatrist.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, researchers and social workers across Turtle Island have built on the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Māori education scholar who writes about the need to decolonize the ways in which Indigenous people do research.<sup>35</sup> A core part of this call is the consideration of the epistemological values and specificities of Indigenous world-views. Many Indigenous writers tend to center the stories, languages, practices, and philosophies of their particular cultures in imagining trajectories towards self-determination and healing.

This stance of self-determination has been framed as a deliberate “turn away” from efforts to gain recognition from settler states and institutions.<sup>36</sup> Described as Indigenous *resurgence*, this position prioritizes the strengthening of practice and cultures ahead of looking to settlers for a vaguely defined sense of reconciliation. Many scholars in this field draw on Western thinkers already familiar to architectural discourse in order to understand how Indigenous peoples interact with the underlying economic, epistemological, and spatial structures of settler colonial societies: Marxist understandings of property and wealth accumulation, Michel Foucault's writings on knowledge, and Henri Lefebvre's social theory of spatial production, among others, are often cited. Coulthard, among others, emphasizes that the logics and structures of capitalism are key historical and contemporary drivers of settler colonial relations.<sup>37</sup> Facing the magnitude of these intermingling structures and given land's centrality in Indigenous cultures, many activists and scholars focus on *land-based* actions as a site for education and struggle.<sup>38</sup> Land-based practice has been highlighted for its ability to renew relationships between humans

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34     Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 16.

35     Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Second edition. London ; New York: Zed Books, 2012. 17.

36     Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 48.

37     Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 13.

38     Eve Tuck, Marcia McKenzie, and Kate McCoy. “Land Education: Indigenous, Post-Colonial, and

and non-humans, Elders and youth, as well as Indigenous communities and their territories.<sup>39</sup> These relations underscore the importance of understanding such practices and movements as they relate to ethics of reciprocity and responsibility.

Echoing such calls for self-determination, many scholars have highlighted the need for increased Indigenous representation in the built environment professions. UNCEDED, Canada's official entry for the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale led by Douglas Cardinal, Gerald McMaster, and David Fortin, exhibited the work of eighteen Indigenous architects from different territories across Turtle Island.<sup>40</sup> The project aimed to communicate how each contributor's work demonstrates an "Indigenous expressionism", synthesizing elements of their particular lands, teachings, stories. This example demonstrates the importance of identity and community in imagining healthier ways forward for our cities. Given my position as a settler, however, my research approach was to look and listen instead of attempting to reproduce or appropriate Indigenous approaches to architecture.

Much of the settler discourse on how the built environment professions engage Indigenous peoples also comes from many distinct places. Urbanists and planners in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly, have been influential in interrogating how planning, from central cities to the 'remote' reaches of the colony, has shaped and been shaped by colonial efforts to assemble land and capital to the detriment of Indigenous peoples. Libby Porter, an Australian planner, convincingly builds on Lefebvre's triangular framework of spatial production in her exploration of how colonialism's myriad processes rely on the technologies of planning.<sup>41</sup> Through this lens, architecture comes after other forms of spatial practice such as treaty negotiation, surveying, property division, and natural resource planning. Architecture gives concrete form to, and relies on the material products of, prior decisions about the exploitation of land. Despite this remove, architecture is far from a neutral tool. Janet McGaw, an Australian architect, explains how built form can either serve to further erase Indigenous presence and

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Decolonizing Perspectives on Place and Environmental Education Research." *Environmental Education Research* 20, no. 1 (2014). 10.

39 Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1–25.14.

40 Cardinal, Douglas, David Fortin, and Gerald McMaster. "Unceded: Voices of the Land." Venice, 2018.

41 Libby Porter. *Unlearning the Colonial Cultures of Planning*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2015. 43.

culture or, less frequently, become a site for Indigenous and decolonizing perspectives.<sup>42</sup> Architecture's emancipatory potential has limits in the hands of settler architects and institutions, especially where projects are aimed at either vague reconciliation with or recognition of Indigenous peoples. Engaging with the discourse of resurgence suggests that we might instead look to more nimble, Indigenous-led forms of spatial production.

Understanding the spatial implications of these modes of activity requires an expanded notion of the architecture field. 'Critical spatial practice' refers to "projects located between art and architecture", and is an umbrella term first coined by British scholar Jane Rendell and which later evolved into its own discourse.<sup>43</sup> Drawing again on Lefebvre as well as Michel de Certeau, this inclusive category or descriptor neatly collects many disparate forms of art, critique, or habit which critically challenge existing spatial orders.<sup>44</sup> Architectural theorist Jill Stoner expands the architectural field further, using the term 'minor architecture' to fold in practices from literary writing to informal squatting.<sup>45</sup> In her critique of contemporary architectural practice, Stoner looks hopefully to these examples as "response[s] to latent but powerful desires to undo structures of power."

I use 'tectonics' in a similarly broad sense. Kenneth Frampton, looking to extensive art historical and philosophical debates on the nature of building, uses tectonics to reassert the "expressive potential" of architecture's "earthbound nature".<sup>46</sup> Privileging the physical organization of structure and material runs parallel to the primacy of land and the tangible in discourses of resurgence. The practices studied in this thesis, accordingly, make relationships between more than concrete and timber. The 'tectonics' of these projects are complex and intentional organizations of people, soil, water, plants, and so on. With this in mind, we can understand the tangible and spatial power each node in Lefebvre's triad: the interactions of lived, conceived, and representational space produce webs of material presence.

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42 McGaw, Janet, and Anoma Pieris. *Assembling the Centre : Architecture for Indigenous Cultures : Australia and Beyond*. New York City: Routledge, 2014. 1,13.

43 Rendell, Jane. "Critical Spatial Practice." Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://criticalspatialpractice.co.uk/>.

44 Rendell, Jane. "Critical Spatial Practice." Art Incorporated, 2008. 3.

45 Stoner, Jill. *Toward A Minor Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018. 7.

46 Frampton, Kenneth. *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997. 2.

These are the theories on which I build to propose a framework of ‘(post)colonial tectonics’: an understanding of our settler colonial milieu, and the ways contemporary Indigenous peoples, and sometimes settler allies, organize tangible reciprocal relationships between individuals, their labor, matter, and the land. In the context of this study, (post)colonial has both critical and projective connotations. While the term originated in India in reference to the end of foreign imperial rule, colonialism never ended in settler colonial settings such as Canada. Thus, Canada is (post)colonial in the sense that Canadian ways of doing and thinking, for Settler and Indigenous people alike, are deeply influenced by colonial structures and attitudes.<sup>47</sup> Formulating an idea of (post)colonial tectonics recognizes the Indigenous authors of these constructions as creatively integrating or working against an imposed spatial culture. Labeling these actions as such also positions them as potential trajectories towards transcending harmful colonial patterns. These practices can be read as attempts to uncover historical erasures and synthetically blend together particular Indigenous relationships to culture and land.

In order to contextualize a set of disparate examples, I found it helpful to construct slippery categories of *presence*, *work*, and *projection*. These correlate roughly to the *lived*, *perceived*, *conceived* or the *representational*, *practice*, and *representation* triads of Henri Lefebvre’s theory of spatial production;<sup>48</sup> *presence* reveals how space is understood or described by “inhabitants”; *work* describes the “daily reality” of land-based practices; *projection* refers to the translation of the lived and perceived into new spaces by architects and other “artist[s] with a scientific bent”. The practices in each container overlap and cross scales, but share common methods for organizing relations and producing space. For example, mounting an event like Two Row on the Grand invariably involves *work* and *projection*, but the “concrete” at the core of its spatial impacts is the relationship between the land and human *presence*: two nearly kilometer-long rows of paddlers enacting a centuries-old pact along the contested banks of the Grand River.

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<sup>47</sup> I borrow the use of the parentheses from Porter, who writes from an Australian context about being “forever implicated... in colonialism’s enduring philosophies...” Porter, *Unlearning the Colonial Cultures of Planning*. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 39.

## Introduction

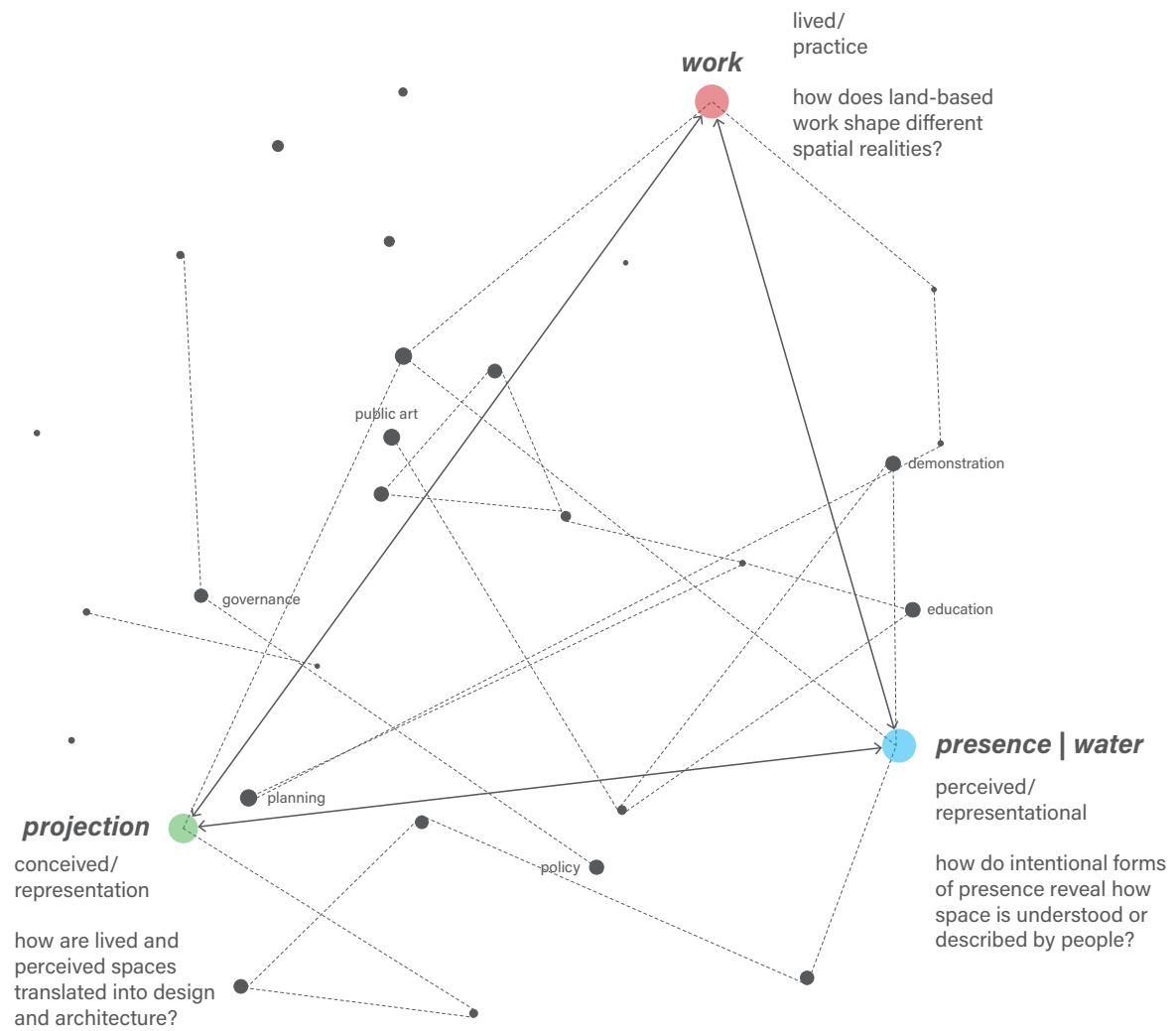


figure 1.9 Diagram showing relationships between chapters and practices.





## *Methodology and Scope*

[The] narrative conceived as a carrier bag/belly/box/house/  
medicine bundle... its purpose is neither resolution nor stasis, but  
continuing process.

Ursula Le Guin<sup>49</sup>

As I describe in *Motivation and Trajectory*, my initial approach to working through the questions of Indigenous space in the city replicated familiar patterns in Western architectural practice, and research more broadly, of the “heroic” designer solving problems for a disadvantaged community. While I hoped to carry out this “research” in a respectful way that benefited my imagined participants, repeated attempts to frame it as such continued to leave me with nagging methodological concerns.

These sorts of concerns, thoroughly summarized by Libby Porter, include: uneven power dynamics between settler researcher and Indigenous participants, incommensurability of world-views, and the “reifi[cation] of an ‘Indigenous’ other.”<sup>50</sup> Borrowing the idea of ‘imperial eyes’ from Linda Tuhiwai Smith, an influential Maori education scholar, Porter describes the pitfalls of her PhD dissertation on Indigenous encounters with settler planning institutions. Ultimately, Porter implies that the very real issues these concerns present do not mean settlers should avoid this kind of research. Instead, these questions should motivate a continual and reflexive analysis of position and method.

Grappling with this danger resulted in a less comfortable and more meandering process involving reading, listening, engaging, looking, and reflecting. I imagine this thesis as a “carrier bag”: a way to hold a set of people, places, and stories together “in a particular, powerful relation to one another” and to myself.<sup>51</sup> This framing is not a solution or finalized method for safely approaching this work, but a

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49 Ursula Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*. New York: Grove Press, 1989. 153

50 Porter, Libby. “On Having Imperial Eyes.” In *Ethics and Planning Research*, edited by F Lo Piccolo and H Thomas, 219–32. Melbourne: Ashgate, 2009.

51 At the conclusion of *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, an anthropological study of matsutake mushrooms “which refuses to end,” Tsing makes reference to science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin’s “Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction.” Le Guin’s description of her approach to writing is a feminist rebuke of the linear, anthropocentric, violent under-pinnings of science and science-fiction. Le Guin herself was the daughter of Alfred Kroeber, an early cultural anthropologist known for his research on the Indigenous peoples of California. Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton University Press, 2015. Le Guin, Ursula K. “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction.” In *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*. New

reminder that the research is unfinished and non-exhaustive. Rather, this document is a snapshot of an expanding set of ideas and happenings which I simply had the good fortune to encounter.

With this in mind, the structure, categories, and analytical tools I employ are simply an attempt at making meaningful connections between these disparate stories rather than authoritative descriptions. Holding these projects together in categories allowed me to understand the ways in which they operate. The three chapters of *Presence/Water*, *Work/Ground*, and *Projection/Seed* each consist of four written elements: an *orientation*, a *study*, a *constellation*, and a *response*.

The *orientations* describe my encounters with emblematic art pieces which I was either pointed to or stumbled upon including an artist multiple, a short story, and an immersive virtual reality installation. I briefly describe the context they operate within and explore how they suggest alternate “ways of inhabiting” space.<sup>52</sup> These writings are accompanied by diagrams aimed at explicating and distilling some of these suggestions in a visual manner.

The *orientations* set up longer *studies*. These sections focus on projects I was able to meet the organizers of, engage in, or simply visit: a canoe trip, an Indigenous food garden, and a pavilion on a college campus respectively. I open each *study* with a description of my involvement to maintain an understanding of my perspective. The writing here also looks at the colonial setting of each project, and digs deeper into the Indigenous perspectives, tools, and methods at play. I describe the spatial impact of these interventions, and include analytical plans, sections, and axonometric drawings which attempt to represent these subtle forces.

To bolster the *orientations* and *studies* with more context, each chapter includes a *constellation* of five additional projects and initiatives operating in similar modes and areas. These comparative essays aim to bring together and highlight the varied approaches, contexts, and intents of the projects. While I have minimal personal experience with many - though not all - of these examples, together they are important reminders of the multiplicity and density of strategies and stances at play in the region.

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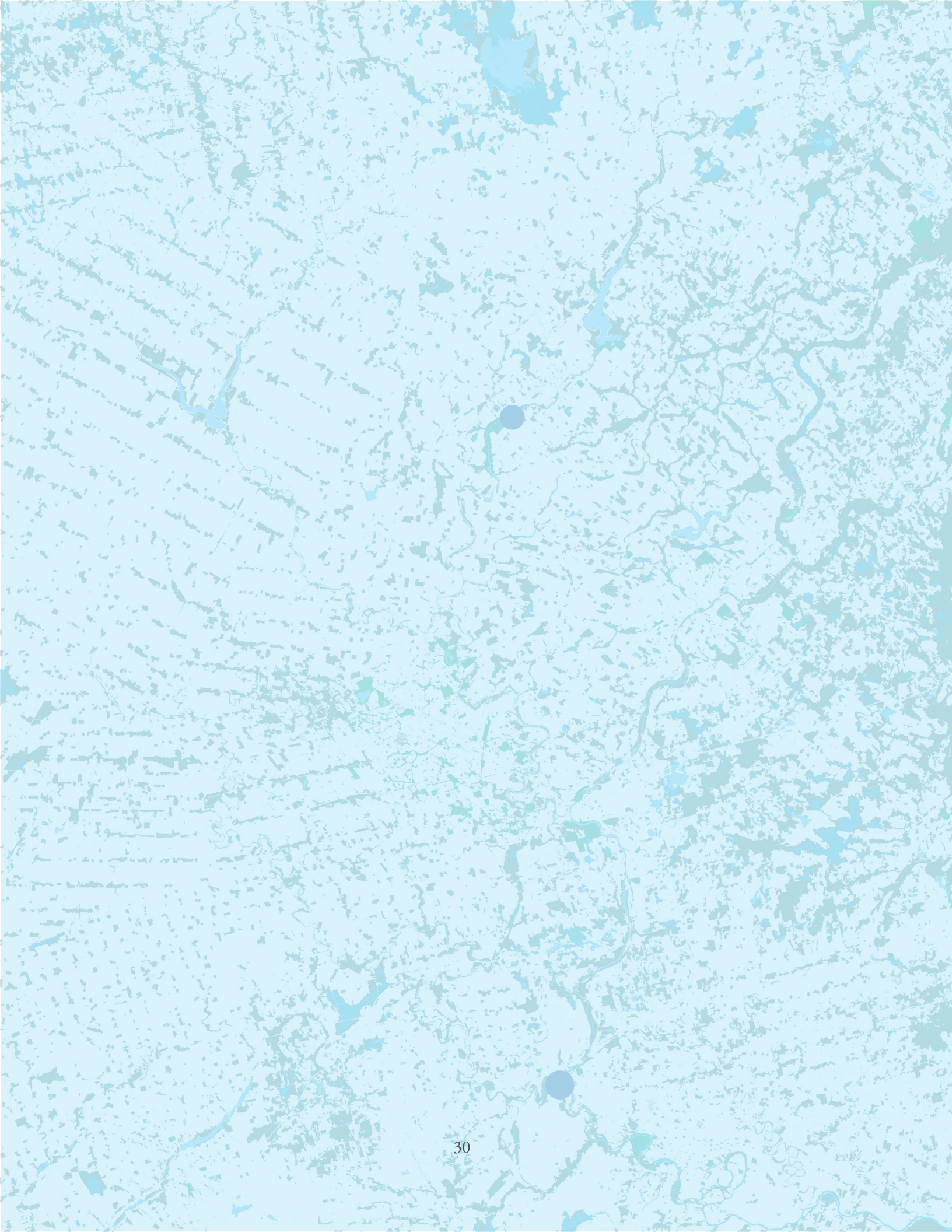
York: Grove Press, 1989. p 153.

52 Angela Waziyatawin Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, 2005, quoted in Mark Rifkin. *Beyond Settler Time. Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. p 2.

## Introduction

My attempt to focus on firsthand experiences and encounters led me to limit the geographic scope of the study. These experience were not bound by the extents of a city or census tract, but by my time working and studying as an architecture student in the region. In order to re-orient my thinking on these places, I used major water features to describe the limits of this set: the Grand River and Lake Ontario. This orientation is extended to the maps I use to separate chapters and locate the constellations: city boundaries and urban development are hidden in favor reading space through the density of forests, parklands, wetlands, and rivers.

In the concluding chapter, I speculate on the future of *Minjimendan* and highlight areas for further research and engagement. Through sketches and writing, I consider the ways in which the work at *Minjimendan*, the project with which I had the most personal involvement, might expand over time. This response, a kind of *projection* unto itself, imagines the kinds of gatherings, groundworks, and even structures, might be engendered by or further support the project as it grows. This is far from a resolved solution to perceived issues, but rather a way to explore how the relationships, or tectonics, already present might be strengthened in a respectful manner.







## *Presences/Water*

The practices of Water explore the spatial power of organizing people on the land. The places in question are laden with historical and symbolic meaning, and simply bringing people together upon them with intention can be a powerful didactic and political action. These infrequent, fluid, ephemeral acts are fundamental in providing context to the practices of Ground/Work and Flora/Projection: these are concerted movements of individuals expressing ideas about land which are then practiced on and designed with.



**THIS LAND RUNS ON  
ANISHINAABE  
TIME**

*figure 2.1 Overlay of the Land.*  
Image by Aylan Couchie.

## ***Orientation | Overlay of the Land***

Arist Aylan Couchie chose to print the statement to the left in white block text on black, business card sized stickers and distributed across galleries in Toronto. This disarmingly minimal piece works alternately as a reminder of fact or a hopeful premonition. The piece reframes the viewer's presence, speaking to Indigenous rhythms of time and place: from seasonal movements and lunar patterns, to ideas of deep ancestry and long futurity.<sup>1</sup>

From the first, it undermines the city (Toronto) as a totalizing and completed colonial spatial project. In declining to use the specific name of Toronto, Couchie not only allows the piece to travel across Anishinaabe territories, but asks us to question the other places where we might encounter it. Making a gallery, for example, into a part of "this land" reminds one that the territory of Toronto goes deeper than alienated parcels of property divided by pavement.<sup>2</sup> It is a *land*, rather than generic land, with all the stories and relationships that a *land* brings with it in an Indigenous worldview.<sup>3</sup> This is where "Anishinaabe time" comes in: it points to other cycles and conceptions and time operating in this place.

While the shift to seeing Toronto as a land is already powerful on its own, invoking the people, culture, and language of the territory creates another vision of urban space entirely. The idea that "this land runs on Anishinaabe time" moves in various directions and scales. The reading at the forefront, highlighted by the curators, is that the piece "reminds viewers of whose land they are on but also stands as a reminder of their responsibilities to the land and people."<sup>4</sup> This interpretation is pressing and current, but is not unique to the piece or its phrasing. The popular slogan "YOU ARE ON INDIAN LAND", for example, reproduced on everything from clothing to infrastructure and used as the title of a 1969 documentary about the Awkesasne border dispute,<sup>5</sup> does similar, albeit less place-specific, work to insist on the here and now of Indigenous land tenure. By bringing Anishinaabe *time* into the discussion, Couchie allows for further interpretation.

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1 This is in contrast to the idea of settler futurity, used by Tuck and Yang to critique the permanence of colonial structures and relations. Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012): 1–40. 3.

2 Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton University Press, 2015. 38–43.

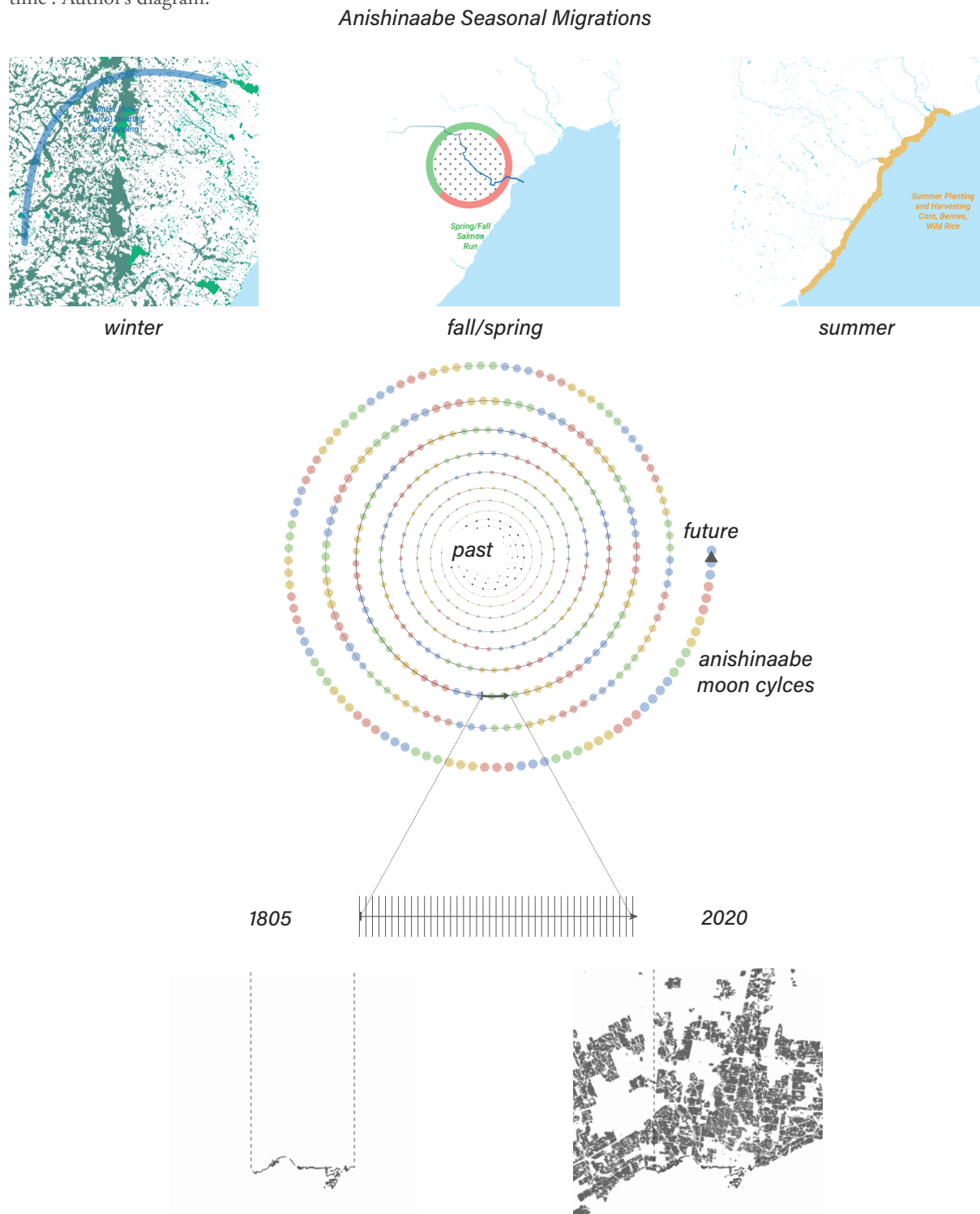
3 Nadasdy, Paul. "The Politics of TEK: Power and the 'Integration' of Knowledge." *Arctic Anthropology* 36, no. 1–2 (1999): 1–18. 4.

4 Couchie, Aylan. *Overlay of The Land*. Toronto: Critical Distance, 2019.

5 Mitchell, Mike Kanentakeron. *You Are on Indian Land*. Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 1969.



figure 2.2 Comparison of Toronto's linear 'settler' history and spiraling 'Anishinaabe time'. Author's diagram.



This is critical, as simply recalling the dispossession at the core of turning Indigenous land into settler cities might not inspire alternative ways of considering urban space. As Eve Tuck tells us, this kind of staid remembrance can sometimes serve to placate settler guilt.<sup>6</sup> Engaging with time, however, might lead to more radical considerations. The work suggests that, despite centuries of colonial violence, Indigenous ways of life have persisted here and will continue to. If we consider the grand scale of “Anishinaabe time”, Toronto’s settler history represents but a small slice of stories which date back to time immemorial<sup>7</sup>, or at least to 9000 BCE<sup>8</sup>. In this view, the concrete which currently dominates the landscape might seem like a more fleeting presence. If we continue to stay with time, now at a smaller scale, we can be oriented towards those non-settler ways of being here. At this scale, “Anishinaabe time” speaks to an overlay of the Gregorian calendar year and another way of considering habitation and activity. Anishinaabe cosmology here describes a cycle of moons relating to various non-human and spiritual rhythms<sup>9</sup>.

The question of time underpins presence and relationships to land. Pre-contact Indigenous relationships to place in the area followed different patterns than that of settler urban development. As opposed to building settlements which assumed indefinite permanence, linear growth, and expansion, history shows forms of organization which worked with rather than against non-human rhythms. Mississauga communities, to use an Anishinaabe example, made their homes according to long-standing seasonal relationships with particular bioregions in the area: the colder months might offer opportunities for sugar-making and trapping in the interior, while shallow lakes made for optimal summer wild rice harvesting areas and the Credit River was home to fall and spring salmon migrations.<sup>10</sup> Families gathered in larger or smaller numbers based on these annual patterns. Ceremony and story continue to be similarly entangled with these biophysical rhythms.

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6 Tuck, and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor”, 3.

7 Weir, Lorraine. “‘Time Immemorial’ and Indigenous Rights.” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 26 (September 1, 2013). 1.

8 Benn, Carl. “The History of Toronto: An 11,000 Year Journey.” City of Toronto Virtual Exhibits, 2006.

9 Judge, Andrew. “Jii Bmoseynah Nokomis Gii B’Mosed: I Am Walking in the Footsteps of My Grandmother.” Cambridge, ON: Cambridge Art Galleries, 2019.

10 Smith, Donald B. *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquaonaby) and the Mississauga Indians*. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013. 7-8.

An alternate conception of time now structures the way space is constructed and occupied in the region. Building practice today is preoccupied with managing the threats of our temperamental seasons to a homogeneous experience of time: HVAC systems and Toronto's underground PATH network, for example, are attempts to mitigating the effects of seasonal changes to ambient environmental conditions. Peter Sloterdijk calls the kind of "environmental thinking" behind air-conditioning a central feature of the modern age, wherein new technologies allowed designers to imagine interior spaces as entirely separate from the world outside.<sup>11</sup> Watching the automatically-regulated artificial lights of our office buildings reveals a logic which assumes that, to borrow Couchie's language, this land runs on *capital* time. In this vision daytime is no longer a function of our position relative to sunlight, but a consistent and universal period in which wage labour is supposed to happen.<sup>12</sup> This relation to the workday structures every scale of a city's built form. The size and function of office buildings, condominium towers, highways, and transit stations depends on a certain number of people, moving between particular places, at specific times of the day, throughout the year. It is hard to picture our cities without these kinds of underlying assumptions about our relationship to time. Thus, considering non-linear and heterogeneous visions of time is almost prerequisite to imagining Indigenous adaptations to urban space. *Presence*, or the specifics of when, where, and how we choose to gather, shapes space as much as the architect's games of proportions and materials.

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11 Sloterdijk, Peter. *Terror from the Air*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009. 9, 34.

12 Tsing, *Mushroom*, 40.



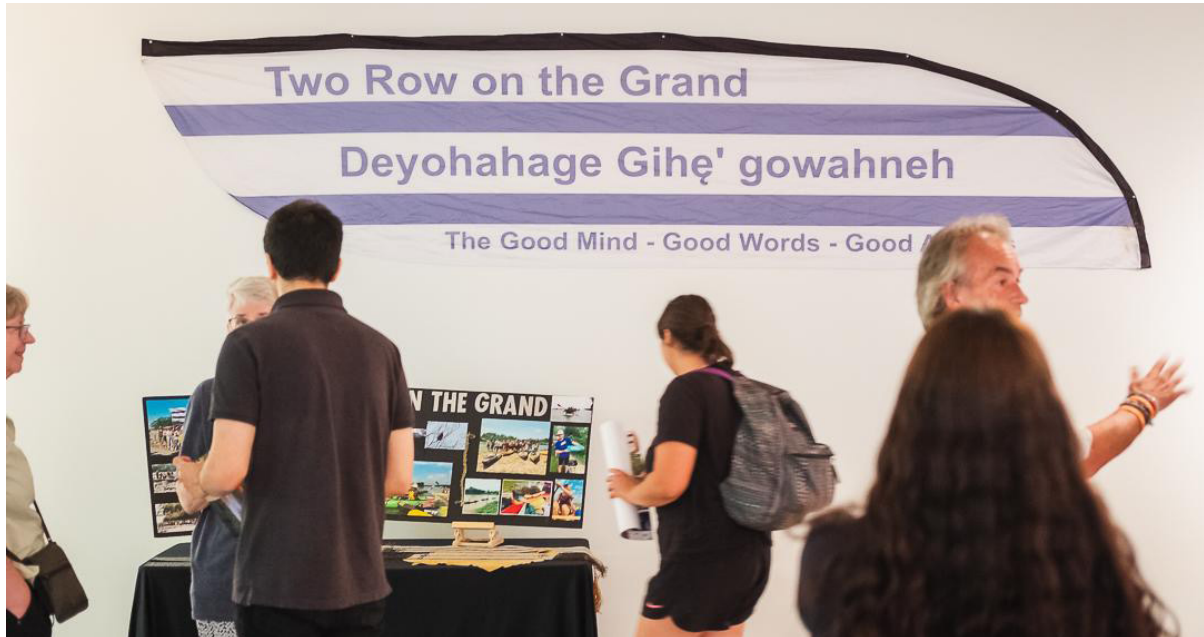


figure 2.3 Two Row on the  
Grand at *Common Waters*.  
Photograph by Vanessa Pejovic.

## *Encounter | Two Row on the Grand*

A large nylon sports banner hangs in the Design at Riverside Gallery in Cambridge, Ontario. A white background is interrupted with two horizontal purple bands. In purple text, in the white space, three lines read; “Two Row on the Grand”, “Deyohahage Gihe’ gowahneh”, and “The Good Mind- Good Words - Good Actions”. On a table under the banner lay two wampum belt replicas and homemade poster boards with photos of smiling paddlers. Deeper in the gallery about fifteen people were sitting in a circle of chairs, quietly anticipating the talk. The guests of honor, two smiley retirees in athletic clothes and cargo pants, sat with us. This was “An Evening with Two Row on the Grand”, a mid-august Common Waters event. If Overlay of the Land is a call to a kind of good mind - recognizing the potential for another set of uses and ontologies in the city - we were gathered here to share good words about good actions.

The speakers, Ellie Joseph and Jay Bailey, were here to tell us about the founding and experience of *Two Row on the Grand*, a week-long paddle trip down the Grand river organized in “one Indigenous row and one settler/immigrant row – to demonstrate the simple concept of the Two Row Wampum Treaty.”<sup>13</sup> Ellie and Jay came to us as organizers and representatives of these two rows. Ellie, a Mohawk woman from the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve, spent her working career as an elementary school teacher in her community. Jay took a longer route to the Grand, starting out as a missionary on reserve in Manitoba and eventually coming to Norfolk County, a small municipality south-west of Six Nations, as a French teacher and contemporary voyageur. Ellie and Jay have their own connections to paddling and the question of settler-indigenous relations; the former as a Haudenosaunee woman who spoke fondly of paddling down the Grand to school as a child, and the later as a settler who, through his time as a voyageur and missionary, learned how to paddle a birchbark canoe replica and had seen the impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples across Canada. They met in 2013 after participating in a two-week “enactment” of the Two Row along the Hudson River from Albany to New York City, marking the 400th anniversary of the treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch in 1613.<sup>14</sup> It was not long after that they started planning for a similar project on the banks of the Grand River.

The trip which Ellie, Jay, and company planned is more than a simple demonstration of a historical

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13 Two Row on the Grand. “Two Row On The Grand | Annual Canoe Paddle on the Grand River,” 2020. <http://www.tworowontheGrand.com/>.

14 Hill, Susan M. *The Clay We Are Made of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River*. Critical Studies in Native History, 20. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2017. 85.

agreement, however. It imbues the Two Row Wampum with urgency by treating it as a living document to be reinterpreted and engaged with, while at the same time preparing participants to do that work in their own lives. In addition to being a fun trip down the river, the itinerary includes stops for hikes to archaeological sites, time for dancing and song, shared feasts, evening talks on topics from traditional medicines to decolonization, as well as sharing from community Elders.<sup>15</sup> While all of this was enjoyable and eye-opening for settler participants, Jay and Ellie were amazed at how healing the experience was for the Indigenous paddlers specifically.<sup>16</sup> These kinds of good words and good actions supported a shift to a good mind - whether for settlers unlearning racist myth and historical misconception or for Indigenous people facing the effects of colonial policy and intergenerational trauma. This kind of healing, education, and friendship-building is a critical foundation for a continued engagement with the Two Row Wampum, or any kind of respectful relationship. That the trip is annual and interactive emphasizes that the Wampum is not just a historical fixture like our written treaties, but something that needs to be maintained to remain effective and meaningful.<sup>17</sup> This bundle of meaning, and the way it is communicated, carries a number of interesting spatial shifts.

The very nature of a multi-day trip provides an alternate view of the space along the river. While this kind of portage might not be rare in a provincial park, it is a strange occurrence along an urbanized river like the Grand. There are a number of distinct conditions along the length of the Grand, ranging from natural, or naturalized, banks which cross parkland and private farms to canalized sections protecting various towns and cities from the river's flood. There are dams which leverage the river's kinetic energy for hydro power, replacing the mills which made its banks an industrial hub, as well as promenades and trails which highlight the remains of the Carolinian ecosystem for urbanized walkers and cyclists. Generally, the colonial view of the river, then, has seen it an industrial or recreational space: supporting everything from textile production to catch-and-release sport fishing. It has also been a view which, until the relatively recent introduction of watershed thinking, did not grapple with the river as a singular inter-connected body. *Two Row on the Grand* crosses these same municipal and conceptual boundaries throughout its

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15 Two Row on the Grand. "9 Day Paddle Itinerary." Google Maps, 2019. <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1HI1RmC434YpMcDQK0XxPc38-k7Y&ll=43.00617313762019%2C-79.96616189999997&z=10>.

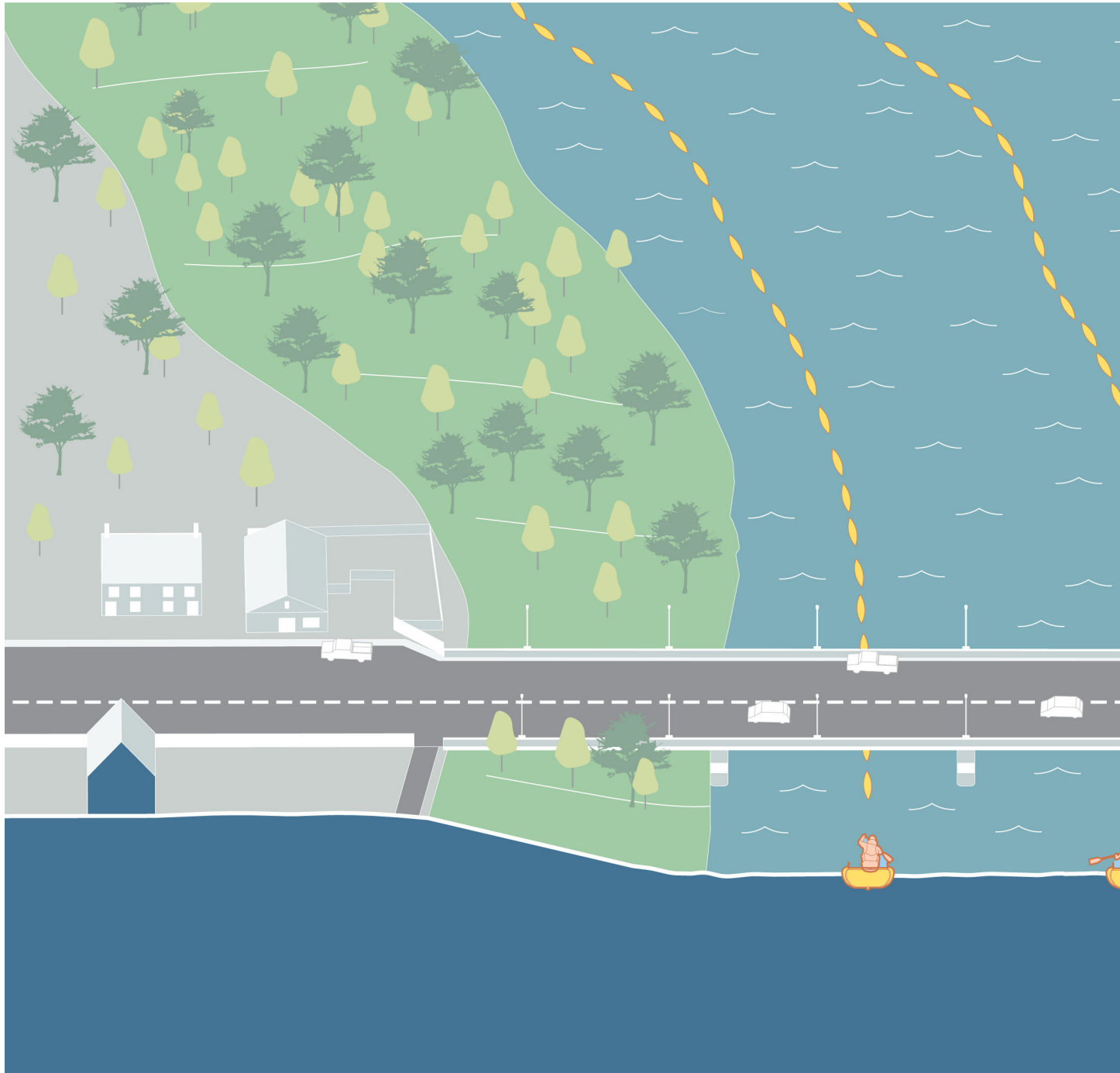
16 Joseph, Ellie, and Jay Bailey. "An Evening with Two Row on the Grand." Cambridge, ON: Cambridge Art Galleries, 2019.

17 Hill, *Clay*, 94-100.





figure 2.5 Two Row on the Grand in the two row formation in 2019. Photograph by Betsy McBurney.



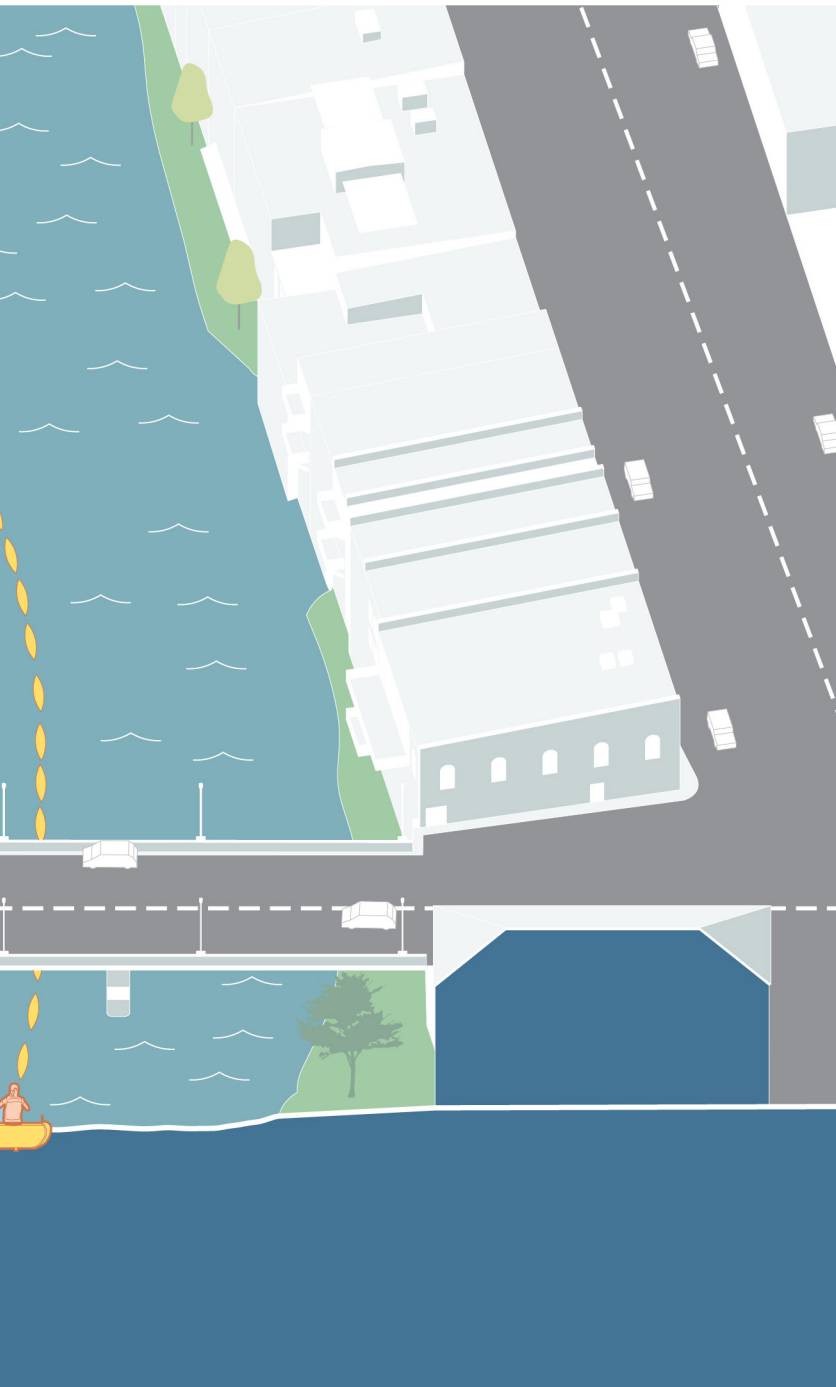


figure 2.6 Two Row on the Grand as it crosses the William Street bridge in Paris. Paddlers form the two rows as they pass a built-up west bank and a naturalized east bank. Author's diagram.

duration. It is alternately recreational, spiritual, social, political, and educational. It passes through the edges of Cambridge, Brantford, and Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, among others, to the mouth at Lake Eerie. That the trip crosses the reserve is particularly significant: the reserve is no longer a separate, extraordinary space as it occupies the same continuum as colonial settlements like Cambridge and Brantford. While this journey does not represent the totality of the Grand, this long, continuous journey, experienced at the speed of the river's flow, might allow one to understand it on new terms.

Before Jay and Ellie's talk, one thing that most struck me about the project was the impressive physical object that the paddlers formed in the pictures (fig. 2.5). When the wind is low enough the group forms two rows of paddlers in brightly colored canoes and kayaks, stretching out anywhere from a couple metres to almost a kilometer in length depending on the size and coordination of the group, demarcating three rows of water. The vibrant little boats and the sun glinting off the water look like the quahog shells of the Wampum belt, and the middle row of water turns into the space of communication so critical to the functioning working of the Two Row. While the healing strength of the journey probably lies most in the teachings and time spent on the water, this massive visual metaphor must leave an enduring impact. I imagine an uninitiated observer on a bridge crossing, wondering why this odd mix of people is paddling in such a particular fashion. Understanding mass formal movements of this sort has its own critical history. Siegfried Kracauer, writing in the early 20th century about emerging forms of entertainment and media, critiques this kind of abstracted spatial formation of bodies as products of a hyper-rational capitalist moment, while at the same legitimizing mass ornaments as objects of aesthetic consideration<sup>18</sup>. He ends his exploration on these phenomena by speaking to an escape from this "empty and superficial shallowness", impugning attempts to transcend lived history, nature, and cultural stories<sup>19</sup>. The object of Two Row on the Grand might satisfy Kracauer's demands, as it arises not from state or corporate organization but is formed by the efforts many actors actively grappling with the histories, cultures, and politics of a place, not to mention the physical fact of a bobbing watercraft on a natural watercourse.

The trip is more than a formal object, however. The two week experience produces and occupies

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18 Kracauer, Siegfried, *The Mass Ornament : Weimar Essays*. trans. Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. 76

19 Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, 86.

a wide array of spaces; opening and closing ceremonies and songs are performed at recreational boat launches, Indigenous philosophy is discussed in park lands, feasts happen by urban riversides or directly on the water, and camp is made on private property. There is also an “ethical space” held in the canoe, which Bonnie Freeman and Trish Van Katwyk experienced as they intentionally combined “being and doing”.<sup>20</sup> This “critical consciousness” arises as participants simultaneously navigate Indigenous-Settler relationships, the mechanics of good paddling, and the changing conditions of the river. Through its ability fold in these myriad concerns, Two Row on the Grand demonstrates the powerful spatial impact of bringing people together with intention.

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20 Freeman, Bonnie, and Trish van Katwyk. “Testing the Waters: Engaging the Tekeni Teyoha:Ke Kahswenhtake/Two Row Wampum into a Research Paradigm.” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 41, no. 1 (2019): 168–185. 15-16.





figure 2.7 Regional map showing projects among rivers, lakes, forests, and parklands. Author's diagram with data from Open Street Maps.

## *Constellation of Presences*

“Overlay of the Land” and Two Row on the Grand organize their presence around deep questions of territory and relationship. These are central issues to much Indigenous organizing, but these projects have distinct ways of approaching them. “Overlay” demonstrates the power of time as an organizing principle, while Two Row on the Grand imagines a new politics through relationship-building at the scale of the individual. The former re-frames the viewer’s presence and perspective, while the latter brings people to a specific place in a particular way. However, these are only two examples in a region seeing plenty of Indigenous art and organizing which explore related issues in their own ways.

Marking can be a powerful tool for shifting perspective on presence. *First Story Toronto [1]* is a blog and mobile app project aimed at connecting users with places which mark historical and contemporary Indigenous presence in Toronto<sup>21</sup>, from important managed ecosystems like the Black Oak Savannah at High Park to paved streets like Indian Road which correspond to much older trails. The app shows Toronto densely peppered with important sites, marked with medicine wheels, all of which are tagged with user generated written entries ranging from brief academic reports to first-person accounts. This kind of practice has the potential to affirm and strengthen the traditional and continued presence of Indigenous peoples in Toronto, a kind of wiki for proving that this place really does “run on Anishinaabe time.”

Sometimes these histories can be marked in other, more theatrical ways. *Talking Treaties*, an on-going mixed-media community art project, uses drama and comedy to explore, among other topics, the complicated histories of Toronto’s treaties.<sup>22</sup> *By These Presents [2]* is a series of films produced under this banner and presented at the inaugural Toronto Biennial of Art which dramatically reinterprets the Toronto Purchase in order to draw out the conflicting conceptions of the treaty. The films shows the cast acting at the natural borders of the purchase, using contemporary presence to demystify an agreement which is typically only represented with text or maps. Directed by Ange Loft, an artist from Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, and co-written with Victoria Freeman, the piece employs irony and humor to highlight different sets of spatial practice in historical Toronto. Filmed on location, and with a large cast of Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors alike, the film positions treaty as a living text to be engaged with and the city as a contested space within that.

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21 Sasaki, Chris. “Seeing Toronto through a Lens of Indigenous Stories: Jon Johnson Brings 13,000 Years of History to Life.” U of T News, 2019.

22 Jumbles Theatre. “Talking Treaties,” 2019.



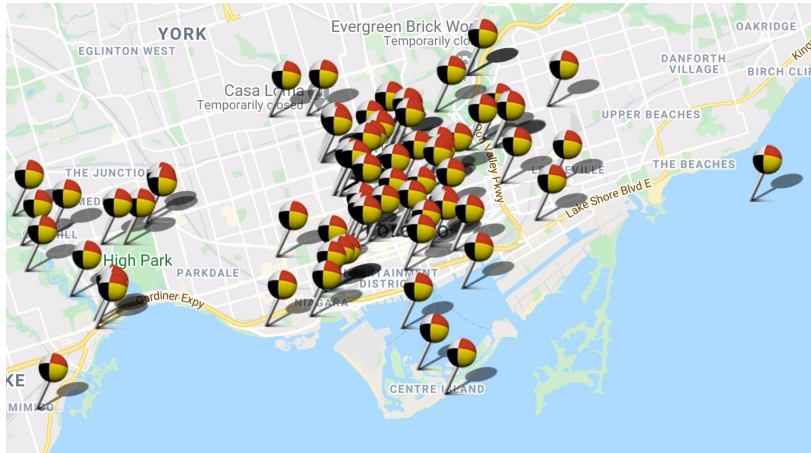


figure 2.8 *First Story Toronto* app interface showing points of interest marked with 'Medicine Wheel' pins. Author's screenshot.



figure 2.9 Still from *By These Presents: "Purchasing" Toronto*, showing a Mississauga representative signing the Toronto Purchase by the Humber River. Image via Jumblies Theatre.



figure 2.10 The *Wigwam Chi-Chemung* houseboat traversing the Lake Ontario shoreline. Photograph by Diana Yoon.

*Wigwam Chi-Chemung* [3], a houseboat turned artist studio marked a reoccupation of another of Toronto's aquatic boundaries: the downtown shore of Lake Ontario. Presented in the summer of 2019 as an "art installation and Indigenous interpretive learning centre," the houseboat acted as a sort of residency and event space for a summer program designed by Myseum, a Toronto arts and culture organization, and Duke Redbird, an influential Anishinaabe elder, artist, and scholar.<sup>23</sup> Using the pontoon and lake as places for talks on astrophysics, the celebration of moon cycles, and the performance of plays marks a shift away from the dominant Settler relations to the water. Calling back to traditional presence at the lakefront, the houseboat becomes a space for reflection and culture in a landscape dominated by military or industrial concerns of early colonists and, later, the recreational and aesthetic desires of urbanites. In a reflection of seasonal Indigenous patterns of movement in the area, *Wigwam Chi-Chemung* was pulled ashore in the fall and left only stories and memories of the summer.

The All Nations Grand River Water Walk (GRWW) [4] is a similarly ephemeral gathering with more urgent intentions. Building on the work and teachings of the late Josephine Mandamin, an Anishinaabe water protector and Elder from Manitoulin Island, who began a movement of 'water walks' with her journey around the Great Lakes in 2003.<sup>24</sup> These water walks were both political and spiritual in nature, a way to call attention to and protect rivers and lakes as well as rekindle sacred relationships with these waters.<sup>25</sup> Beginning in 2017, Mary Anne Caibaiosai, an Anishinaabe helper living in Kitchener, began planning a similar walk for the Grand River with the help of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous supporters (fig. 2.9). This walk, entering its third year in 2020, is envisioned as a continuous ceremonial trek along the entire length of the river, starting at either the source or the mouth of the river depending on the year. As a form of ceremony, the walkers proceed in particular formations, carry a sacred pail of water, and sing to the waters around them. Like Two Row on the Grand, the GRWW crosses municipalities, Indigenous territories and reserves, ecosystems, and forms of settler land development. Common Waters was fortunate to host Caibaiosai and Edward George Waasekom, a younger Anishinaabe water protector, for a talk on their experience in 2019. While the traditions and songs are particularly Anishinaabe in origin, they described how the walk is carried out by a broad coalition which includes

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23 Myseum. "About Wigwam Chi-Chemung," 2019. <https://www.wigwamchichemung.com/about>.

24 Caibaiosai, Mary Anne. "How the Grand River Water Walk Came to Be." *Alternatives Journal*, 2019.

25 Caibaiosai, Mary Anne, and Edward (Waasekom) George. "Water Is Sacred." Cambridge, ON, Design at Riverside, 2019.

many settler allies. The inclusion of ‘All Nations’ in the walk is a call to responsibility and action in recognition of Mandamin’s charge that “all two-legged have to walk for the water.”<sup>26</sup> Caibaiosai and Waasekom described to the audience how the walk, and the walkers, were impacted by the infrastructures and property boundaries of the area.<sup>27</sup> Private farms and extraction sites, as well as roads and highways, often blocked direct access to the river while intense car traffic took a mental and physiological toll on the group. In this way the walk was also a kind of research, with Caibaiosai remarking that “to walk is to witness and from that, to learn.”<sup>28</sup> The restrictiveness of urban centres and the conditions of bounded properties came alongside more hopeful encounters with the rhythms of the watershed’s non-human actors and cross-cultural storytelling. Noticing and simply being with the river’s network of good relations and harmful incursions becomes a form of stewardship predicated on presence.

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26 Caibaiosai, “How the Grand River Water Walk Came to Be.”

27 Caibaiosai, George (Waasekom), “Water is Sacred.”

28 Caibaiosai, “How the Grand River Water Walk Came to Be.”



figure 2.11 Mary Anne  
Caibaosai carrying a staff and  
copper pail of water on the  
2018 Grand River Water Walk.  
Image by Leah Gerber.







The background of the page is a detailed aerial photograph of a coastal area, likely in the Southeastern United States. The land is a mix of green fields, brown patches, and grey infrastructure. A large body of water, possibly a bay or estuary, is visible in the lower half of the image. Five red circular dots are placed on the map: one in the top right corner, and a cluster of four in the center-right area, near the coastline.

## *Work/Ground*

If presence is primarily interested in how people are placed in relation to the land, ground is about organizing their daily actions and practices. These examples often involve both occupation and design, but their most important spatial effects are created through everyday effort: tilling soil, seeding plants, tapping trees, pulling weeds. Unlike the acts of water/presence, these practices leave immediate, tangible traces on the places in which they operate.



figure 3.1 Urban maple  
tapper stopped by an  
automatic security light, still  
from “Biidaaban (The Dawn  
Comes)”. Image by Leanne  
Betasamosake Simpson and  
Amanda Strong.



## **Orientation | “Plight”**

“This is our sugar bush. It looks different because there are three streets and 150 houses and one thousand people living in it, but it is my sugar bush. It is our sugar bush.

- Leanne Betamosake Simpson<sup>1</sup>

In the short story ‘Plight’ Simpson, an Anishinaabeg scholar and activist, describes an “urban sugar-making adventure” on an early spring weekend. Simpson retells the efforts of her group, the ‘Fourth World Problems Collective’,<sup>2</sup> to tap sugar maples in an affluent Toronto neighborhood. Layered with humor and irony, the densely packed passage touches on disparate themes from motherhood to white guilt, and explores the politics and performativity of their desire to simply “make syrup in [her] backyard.” Among all of these considerations, the spatial ramifications of this simple act are inescapable for Simpson. This practice, carried out by Anishinaabeg womxn on Anishinaabeg land, returns this ordered urban neighborhood to a sugar bush. While she sarcastically labelled this radical action an “adventure” in order to placate nervous neighbors, by the end of the story it is made clear that this is a kind of ceremony. Simpson offers tobacco to the sugar maples and describes seeing “salmon, eel, caribou, eagle, and crane.”<sup>3</sup> Whether this is a poetic elaboration or a vision, the appearance of these familiars, and even these practices, can be read as a profound unsettling of this quiet neighborhood.

While there is some irony in quoting a story which pokes fun at settlers “hold[ing] us up as the solution”, this anecdote is deceptively powerful. This practice of tapping trees and offering medicine on the private lots of a downtown neighborhood undoes various “structures of power”.<sup>4</sup> That this cultural act necessitates trespassing, and is ultimately tolerated, signals a small provocation against the dominant conception of land as bounded parcels of private property.<sup>5</sup> Simpson’s description holistically folds in the spiritual and practical, human and non-human, natural and urban, working against strict zoning

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1 Simpson, Leanne Betamosake. *This Accident of Being Lost: Songs and Stories*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2017. 5-8.

2 This is a tongue-in-cheek reference to George Manuel’s description of Indigenous peoples in the ‘First World’ as a “Fourth World”. See: Manuel, George, and Michael Posluns. *The Fourth World : An Indian Reality*. Edited by George Manuel and Michael Posluns. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

3 Simpson, *This Accident*, 8.

4 Stoner, Jill. *Toward A Minor Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018. 7.

5 Borrows, John. “Living between Water and Rocks: First Nations, Environmental Planning and Democracy.” *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 47, no. 4 (1997). 430.

distinctions in specific, and, potentially, a presiding epistemological perspective of compartmentalization in general.<sup>6</sup> The practice itself and the statement that “this is our sugar bush,” despite the prevailing social and physical orders of the city, are strong assertions of an Indigenous “right to the centre”.<sup>7</sup> This is a reminder that this is still Indigenous land, despite a reserve system which sought to restrict Indigenous people to rural and remotely controlled areas<sup>8</sup>.

This work leaves a minimal trace on this urban land. Spray-painted thunderbird stencils mark appropriate maple trees, spigots are tapped into the trees while the maple runs in the later winter, and only drilled holes are left behind. These small marks only hint at the work’s impact, however. The practice, repeated with dozens of trees, produces an alternate overlapping space in the quite, propertied neighborhood.

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6 Nadasdy, Paul. “The Politics of TEK: Power and the ‘Integration’ of Knowledge.” *Arctic Anthropology* 36, no. 1–2 (1999): 1–18. 5.

7 McGaw, Janet, Anoma Pieris, and Emily Potter. “Indigenous Place-Making in the City: Disposessions, Occupations and Implications for Cultural Architecture.” *Architectural Theory Review*, 2011. 305.

8 Libby Porter. *Unlearning the Colonial Cultures of Planning*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2015. 75.

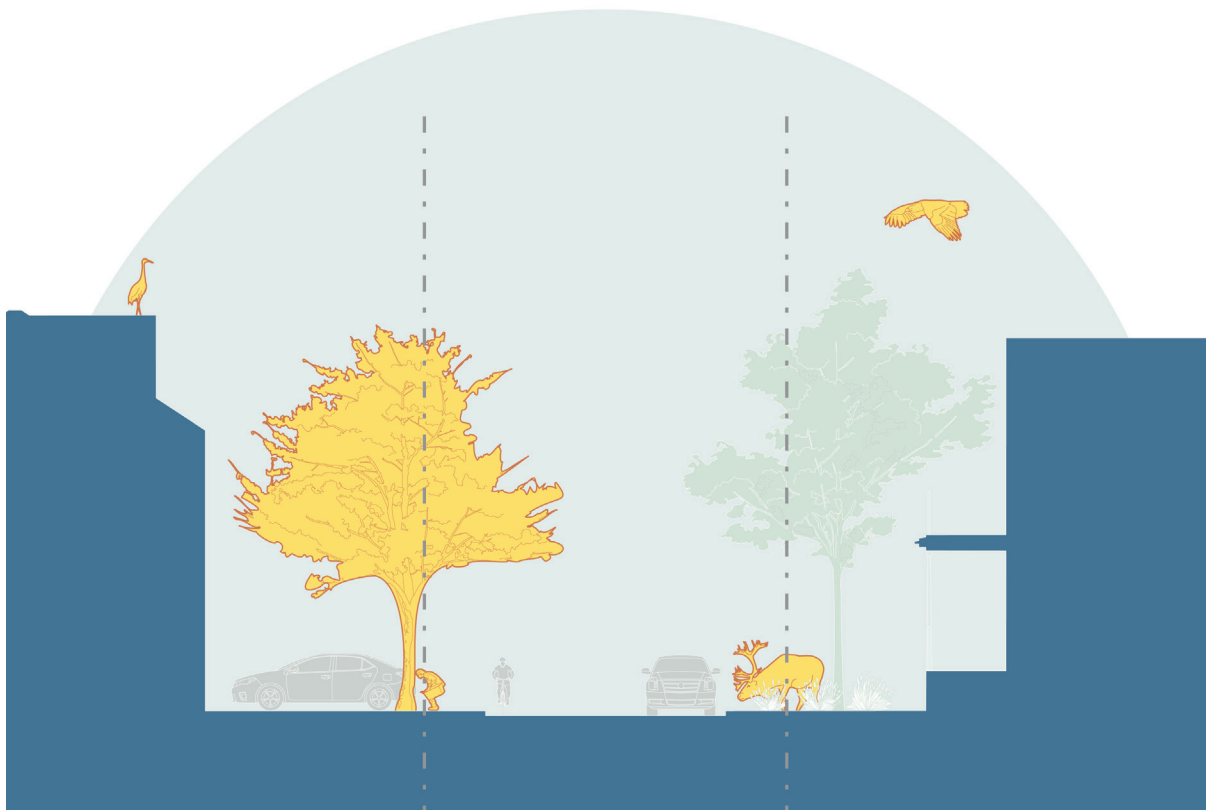


figure 3.2 Maple trees  
transgressing urban property  
boundaries. Author's diagram.



figure 3.3 Minjimendan  
in the spring, pre-planting.  
Author's photograph.

## *Encounter | Minjimendan*

My first visit to the Minjimendan Indigenous Foods Garden was on a cold, rainy day in late May of 2019. I biked to the site on the *rare* Charitable Research Reserve for a ‘Planting Workshop’ organized by Dr. Andrew Judge, a professor of Indigenous Studies at Conestoga College, and the founder of Minjimendan. I traveled with great excitement, having heard and read about Andrew and the garden since the fall prior.

I was properly introduced to the garden earlier that year, at a wintertime ‘Community Feast and Celebration’ organized by Andrew’s ‘Gathering of Hearts and Minds to Restore the Land Network’. Despite a last minute location change due to a power outage, over a hundred Indigenous and settler community members gathered in an old university hall to hear from Andrew and a number of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe poets, chefs, and elders. Andrew spoke with conviction, urgency, and a kind of self-deprecating humor, about the importance of Indigenous food sovereignty and resurgence in the context of a rapidly changing climate.<sup>9</sup> He spoke modestly about Minjimendan as a step towards these goals, and highlighted the volunteers and supporters who aided him in its founding. He invited friends and community members to speak about the winter, including; Peter Shuler, an Anishinaabe elder who recited poetry; Johl Whiteduck Ringuette, a soft-spoken Anishinaabe and Algonquin chef whose restaurant Nish Dish had catered the event; Kahsenniyo Tahnne Williams, a poet from Six Nations who recited poems about motherhood and intergenerational trauma; and Christine Lefebvre, a Mohawk teacher and helper who spoke about her culture and would later come to both open and close Common Waters in the summer. Beyond being powerful speakers on their own terms, this diversity of people and topics underscored the relationality of Indigenous knowledge and communication. Each issue and person stood in dialogue with one another, as discussions on cultural assimilation and residential schools flowed into commentary on traditional foods and medicines. There was no distinct separation between the practical and the philosophical, between past, present or future, or between the cultural and spiritual. Furthermore, their talks were grounded in specific places and times, and always made reference to teachers, elders, family members, or friends who guided them to the knowledge they shared with us. The tenets of relationality and intention would be critical to understanding the spatial sophistication of Minjimendan.

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<sup>9</sup> Judge, Andrew. “Gathering Hearts and Minds To Restore Land: Community Feast and Celebration.” Waterloo: Conestoga College, 2019.

The day of the ‘Planting Workshop’, Andrew asked us to gather in a circle by the tool sheds for the community garden plots at *rare*’s Springbank Farm site. He led a smudge and invited us to share our names, backgrounds, connections to the area, and our reasons for attending. The group was diverse, and included students of Andrew’s, employees and volunteers from *rare*, as well as local community members. He then walked us through the garden plot to a fenced-in “deer exclusion area”, unlatched a large red gate, and kindly told us to make sure the gate was secured behind us as we entered. He guided us through a series of concentric, wedge-shaped, and mostly bare planting beds separated by rows and columns of hay. Andrew warned us not to step in the hay with a laugh. At the time, I thought this danger was simply a quirk of a recently established garden with logistical issues to work out. At the bottom of this sloping area we reached a central space defined by a gravel spiral which tapered in width towards a stone fire pit, where Andrew welcomed us to Minjimendan.

Zooming out, Minjimendan sits in Springbank Farms, part of *rare*’s larger conservation properties. The over 900 acres of protected property include “water and wetlands”, “cliffs and alvars”, an old-growth tract of Carolinian forest historically named “Indian Woods”, a “confluence” of the Grand and Speed Rivers, and the lowland “Hogsback” forest. *rare* does important work in the name of “preservation, research, and education”, but gaps have historically existed in its consultation with Indigenous peoples. The organization’s most recent Environmental Management Plan (EMP) provides a thorough accounting of the property’s landscape and “biological resources”, while making only four subtle references to the land’s “native” or “aboriginal” history.<sup>10</sup> The EMP generally frames the land as a “natural space” to be protected, a view which obscures the web of Indigenous stewardship and settler encroachment which have formed it over time. This framing also generally forecloses the possibility of a more than recreational engagement with the land: foraging, for example, is expressly forbidden. Springbank Farms is the sole exception to this pattern. Having previously been used for “annual row crops”<sup>11</sup>, the land is hosts community garden plots, the North House, and Minjimendan for the promotion of “ecologically responsible agriculture, as a means to conserve ecosystem services... and engage the community.”

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10 Craig, Shawna, Emily Damstra, Peter Kelly, Patti Leather, Julia Marko Dunn, Laura McDonald, Katherine Mcleod, et al. “Environmental Management Plan | Rare.” Cambridge, 2014. 6, 7, 17, 18, 74.

11 Craig et. al., “Environmental Management Plan.” 27.





figure 3.4 Aerial photograph of Minjimendan in early June, community gardens shown to the south. Drone photography courtesy Shabaan Khokkar.



figure 3.5 Aerial image of rare site.  
Base image from Google Earth with  
author's annotations.



In Anishinaabemowin, the name roughly translates to “in a state of remembering.” To Andrew, sustainability and Indigenous food sovereignty were not about “going back” or “finding new ways forward”, but holistically recalling the ways Indigenous people sustained life in south-western Ontario for countless generations.<sup>12</sup> As he explained the garden to the newcomers, I realized that this “remembering” was all-encompassing and infiltrated every aspect of the garden’s design and planning. His intentions were practical, political, educational, and spiritual.

He explained how those treacherous hay rows were features, not bugs, of the garden’s design. The hay covered two-foot deep swales, which served both hydrological and symbolic purposes. From a technical perspective, the swales helped to evenly irrigate the garden plots, distributing rainwater vertically and horizontally across the site while the hay helped to manage water velocity and erosion. However, the ergonomic challenges these hay pits present also function symbolically. To Andrew, navigating the beds and swales safely necessitated some level of intent and care. This speaks to a sense of treading lightly and, taken broadly, an ethic of living lightly, or “in a good way”. Despite coming from a non-architect, this simple yet highly tactical design maneuver had a profound impact on both the use and reading of the space.

These simultaneously practical and spiritual considerations could be felt throughout the garden. Raised planter boxes were utilized to host wild strawberries not only to limit insect and weed invasion, but to honour the strawberry, or *ode-min*, as a primary fruit and medicine in the culture. The plant species in each bed were carefully oriented around the garden to minimize the casting of undesirable shadows on one another, but also to reflect deeper associations of certain foods and medicines with specific parts of the sky. Beyond the solar orientation of the beds, the various species were planted according to beneficial companion groupings as well as in reference to traditional food pairings such as the ‘three sisters’ of corn, beans, and squash.

Part of the power of Minjimendan lies in the daily practices necessary to its existence. At the planting workshop Andrew explained the level of planning and care involved in every aspect of the garden’s establishment: from the day-to-day singing to the ancient purple corn kernels he had been entrusted with, to tilling and trenching the ground with volunteers over the last year. These kinds of

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12 Judge, “Gathering Hearts and Minds”.



figure 3.6 Axonometric diagram of Springbank Farm showing adjacencies and context.







land-based practices not only had a material impact on the ground, but produced a sense of place through continuous patterns of care, maintenance, teaching, and sharing. I understood that our presence there as workshop participants was critical to the garden's identity. Not only did we have a role in the process of knowledge of transmission which the garden was clearly designed to support, but we became active gardeners as the workshop turned from a lecture to a planting session. Andrew found roles for all the attendees according to interest and ability, graciously allowing us to become a part of the project. I was lucky enough to install a series of simple wooden, tensile trellis structures, plant raspberry bushes, and seed two beds with giant sunflower seeds and corn. Through these roles, we also entered into reciprocal relationships with the plant species present.

In this way, the garden's maintenance regime also expressed larger political ideas. The simple fact that settlers such as myself were allowed and invited to participate in critical parts of the garden, including being entrusted with those treasured purple kernels, was startling to me. Up to then, I had been approaching my research and any Indigenous knowledge or practice with a constant sense of trepidation. This small act suggested that we all had a role to play in this Indigenous space, and, potentially, in larger questions about settler-Indigenous relations moving forward. A critical detail, though, is that this process was led and facilitated by Andrew as an Indigenous person. In a subversive yet inclusive way, the continuous occupation, care, and collaboration on the land expressed in a very tangible way Indigenous people's "right to the ground."

It is also at Minjimendan where the sacredness of land first struck me at an emotional level, years after beginning to read about this kind of sanctity in Indigenous scholarship. At an autumn harvesting ceremony which also marked the closing of Common Waters,<sup>13</sup> Don Russell gathered us at a fire circle to share our thoughts with a group of dozens of attendants. As a warm sunset cast over a field of goldenrod with the garden's tall corns and sunflowers in the distance, one attendee likened the day's events and the space we occupied to church. This was a profound admission given that many of us were here for the first time, meeting on land that hosted a monoculture farming operation just two decades prior. This statement revealed that this ostensibly profane space was turned sacred not through designation, monument, or even continuous history, but through our collective noticing of and caring for the land.

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13 Pejovic, Vanessa. "Reflections from the Harvesting Ceremony and Closing of Common Waters." *Idea Exchange Community Voice*, September 2019.

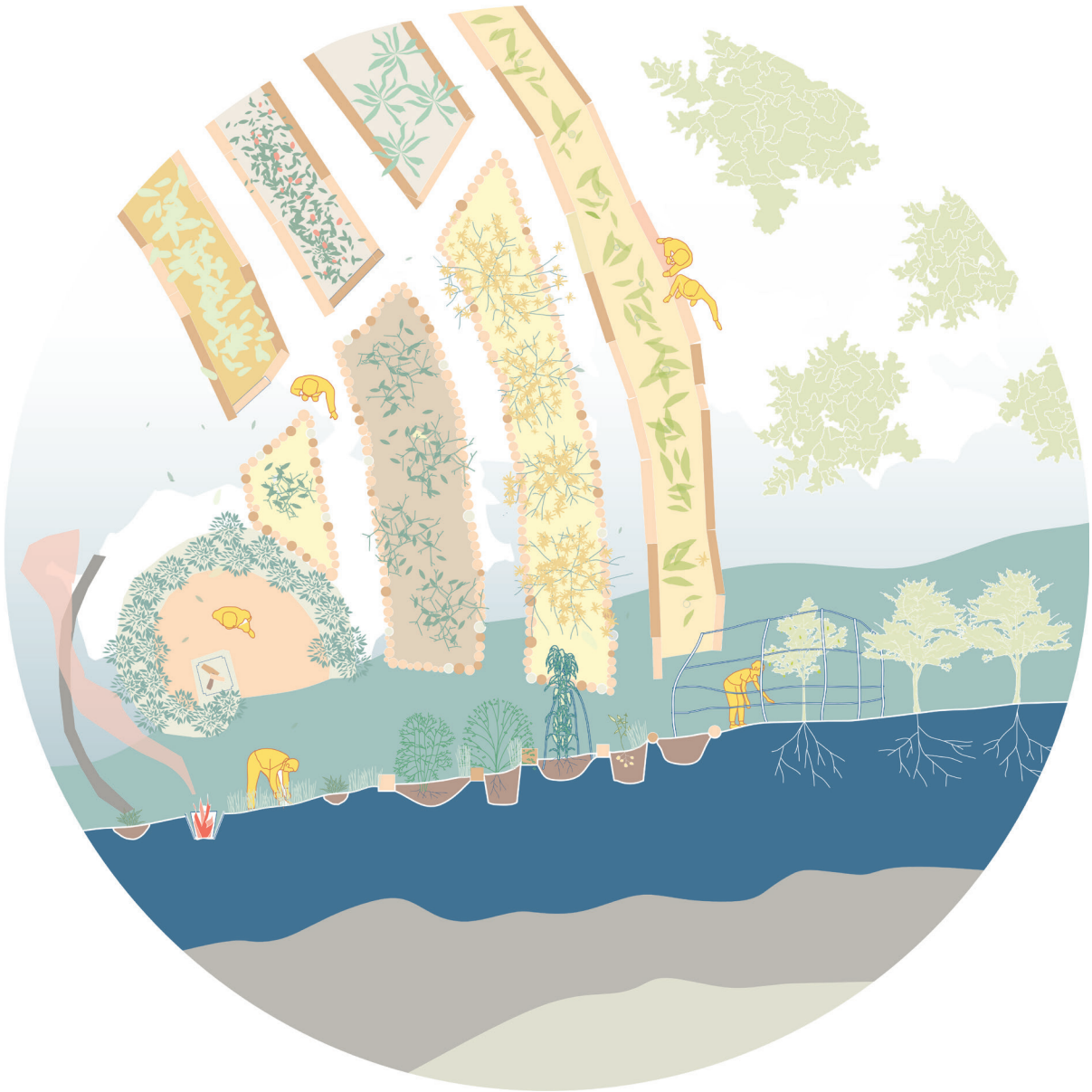


figure 3.7 Plan and section of Minjimendan. Author's image.





figure 3.8 Minjimendan at rest, February 2020. Snow obscures ground cover, only aboveground planting infrastructure remains legible. Photograph by Amina Lalor



figure 3.9 Minjimendan in bloom, at the Fall Harvest Celebration. Leafy flora create volumes and define spaces. Photograph by Vanessa Pejovic.



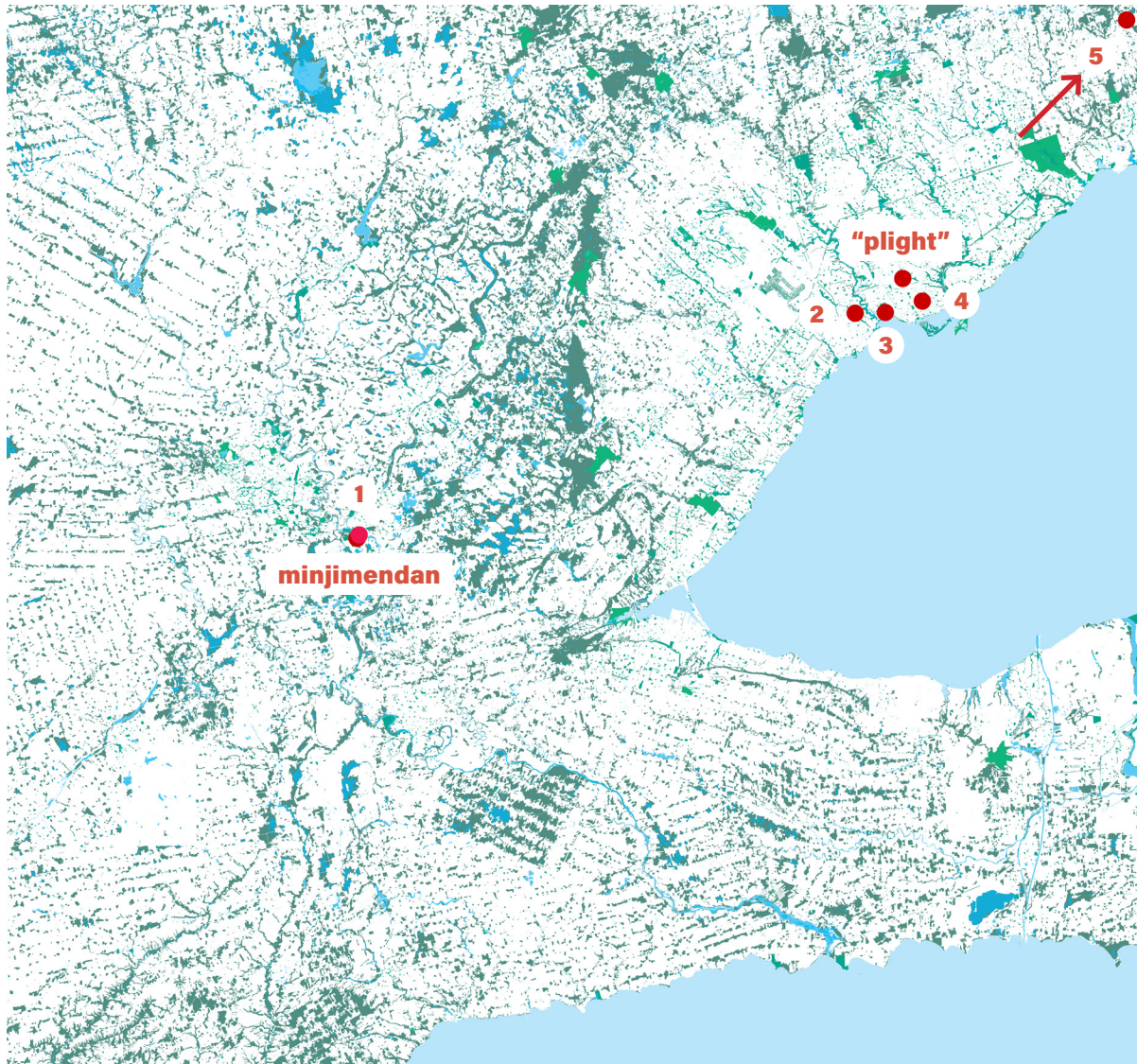


figure 3.10 Regional map showing projects among rivers, lakes, forests, and parklands. Author's diagram with data from Open Street Maps.

## *Constellation of Works*

The work seen in “Plight” and at *Minjimendan* shapes their respective grounds in more and less visible ways. Simpson’s story of maple-tapping leaves subtle marks of spray-paint and tap-holes on the trees, while *Minjimendan* is a much more obvious earthwork of swales and planting beds. Both of these material practices, however, reform the lived space of their sites: the act of doing the work reclaims different kinds of space for Indigenous people in the city. This kind of reclamation has the potential to unsettle colonial relations to the ground. This subversive potential means that these kinds of *work* often present themselves to settlers in the mode of Simpson’s “adventure”: publicly, they speak to “research”<sup>14</sup>, “artistic practice”<sup>15</sup>, or “engaging with land”<sup>16</sup>. These are of course important aspects of these projects, but they do not speak to the radical spaces that they open.

A few steps away from *Minjimendan* on the same Springbank Farm site lies a mysterious trace of one such project. Hidden in a field of tall goldenrod there is a large circular clearing with a central stone firepit in the centre. This is the evidence of *Stone Clay and Fire - Making a Circle [1]*, a durational art installation envisioned by Don Russell. With the help of volunteers and visitors, Russell, a Cambridge-based artist of Mi’kmaq and French ancestry, dug a circular trench, filled it with clay, lined it with stones, and continuously maintained a ring of fire for seven summer days (fig. 3.6).<sup>17</sup> Russell described the installation as a response to his shift in seeing the landscape’s geological features as opposed to the settler constructions built upon it, and hoped for the work to “foster community acknowledgement of Indigenous spaces within the urban setting.”<sup>18,19</sup>

Another, more agile example is Helpers of the Earth or Niikiimagit-Ki [2], an Indigenous community group in Toronto dedicated to creating traditional connections to the land through the reintroduction of native plant species and other activities.<sup>20</sup> With organized outings ranging from deer-

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14 Judge, Andrew. “Minjimendan – Indigenous Garden at the Rare Charitable Research Reserve,” 2020. <http://minjimendan.com/>.

15 CAFKA. “Don Russell: Stone Clay and Fire - Making a Circle | Contemporary Art Forum, Kitchener + Area,” 2018. <https://www.cafka.org/cafka18/don-russell-stone-clay-fire>.

16 Ojibiikaan Cultural Network. “Community | Ojibiikaan.” Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://ojibiikaan.com/our-projects/community/>.

17 Russell, Don. “Stone Clay and Fire - Making a Circle.” Cambridge: CAFKA, 2018.

18 CAFKA. CAFKA.18: Don Russell, 2018.

19 CAFKA, “Don Russell”.

20 Kulfu, Milca. “Helping the Earth.” Indigenous Land, Urban Stories, 2018. <http://>

hide tanning workshops, to days spent planting traditional herbs and plants, to workshops on the use of those plants, the group creates a new usage or layering of space onto city-owned parkland along the Humber River. This goes beyond making the most of leftover or re-used spaces commonly allocated for Indigenous groups, and, through occupation and planting, makes a mark on the city with alternative practices. These examples are indicative of a vibrant and socially engaged Indigenous community in Toronto which is making strides in the face of traumatic histories and problematic urban conditions. This demonstrates stewardship through activity and tradition, and constitutes a sort of re-inscription of values onto the river valleys which have been designated as parkland.

The Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network has an even broader reach in the GTA and focuses more explicitly on the intergenerational relations built by such work. Ojibiikaan currently operates three food and medicine gardens at various scales and in sites with different urban conditions; Mia's Medicine Garden [3] sits among other community gardens in the downtown Toronto's Christie Pitts park and marks the memory of a community member; a traditional food garden at Ashbridge's Estate calls back to archaeological evidence unearthed on the grounds of a heritage manor; the Crawford Lake Three Sisters Garden accompanies replica longhouses at the site of a historical Wendat village in a suburban conservation area.<sup>21</sup> The organization's youth mandate is also expressed in its Ojibikens EarlyOn Program, which offers land-based cultural programming at various Toronto schools and community centres. These gardens and programs reclaim urban space across the city for future generations through continuous work and occupation.

There are other cases where various forms of Indigenous land stewardship traditions are taken up by settler institutions, raising important questions about authorship and intent. One such example is the controlled burns at Toronto's High Park [4], wherein fire is used to maintain the vestiges of an ancient black oak savannah.<sup>22</sup> This practice implicitly recognizes that this now rare form of ecosystem is a kind of design work in itself, managed by Indigenous stewards for generations. This savannah, along with other such landscapes produced through Indigenous burning practices, is a subtle rebuke of the notion that

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[indigenouslandurbanstories.ca/portfolio-item/helping-the-earth/](http://indigenouslandurbanstories.ca/portfolio-item/helping-the-earth/).

21 Ojibiikaan Cultural Network. "Youth | Ojibiikaan," 2019. <https://ojibiikaan.com/our-projects/youth/>.

22 High Park Nature. "Prescribed Burns," 2018. <https://www.highparknature.org/wiki/wiki.php?n=Restore.PrescribedBurns>.



figure 3.11 Process work for *Stone, Clay, Fire*. Photograph by Alex Ortega.



figure 3.12 Healer's of the Earth (Naakaamagit Ki) along the Humber River. Photograph via Unify Toronto.



figure 3.13 Ojibiikaan garden site at Ashbridge's Estate. Photograph via Ojibikaan.







figure 3.14 Controlled burn at High Park in 2018. Photograph via Round the Horn.



figure 3.15 Black Duck Wild Rice's wild rice cultivation at Pigeon Lake. Photograph via FLEdGE Research.

early European colonizers were encountering untouched wilderness. Instead, they encountered landscapes shaped by activities which were unrecognizable to the Western eye as work. While the controlled fires at High Park make for a strange spectacle as a large officially-sanctioned open flame, accompanying news coverage and institutional explanations often omit the lineage of the practice.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, without more information on how or whether the institution is guided by Indigenous leaders or community members, it is hard to evaluate the values embedded in the process. The program has successfully promoted the health and return of many native plants and animal species, but it is worth considering what kind of relationships are being cultivated with the land. Is the resulting savannah an object protected for its aesthetic novelty and scientific rarity, or a place that creates affordances for Indigenous engagement and activity?

These questions of landscape, nature, and agency return in the story of Black Duck Wild Rice [5], an initiative to return wild rice, or manoomin, to lakes in Curve Lake First Nation's (CLFN) traditional territory, south of Peterborough.<sup>24</sup> Like other marshes and wet landscapes in the region, the ecologies of many of these lakes were fundamentally altered through settler activity and occupation. These lakes are now home to cottagers who value the changed waters for their scenic qualities and easy navigability. For decades, James Whetung, a CLFN member, has been working with his community and Elders to reseed wild rice and rebuild the cultural practices associated with it. As a central part of traditional Anishinaabe foodways, reengaging with manoomin represents a significant step towards nutritional and cultural self-determination. Pigeon lake has seen the most significant return of wild rice (fig. 3.10), but this work has not gone on uncontested. The presence of wild rice beds have an impact on the lake's water and ecology. While environmental advocates speak to this as a positive development, cottagers have complained that these changes might return the lake to a "swamp" and negatively impact boating routes and property values<sup>25</sup> Savepigeonlake.com documents the efforts of settler cottagers to petition all levels governments on the issue,<sup>26</sup> which is described as a nearly existential challenge. Much of this attempts to question

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23 Hina Alam. "Prescribed Burns in High Park and Lambton Park | The Star." Toronto Star, April 18, 2017. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/04/18/prescribed-burns-in-high-park-and-lambton-park.html>.

24 Black Duck Wild Rice. "Black Duck Wild Rice," 2019. <https://www.blackduckwildrice.net/>.

25 <http://savepigeonlake.com/news-letters/>

26 Larry Wood. "TRI-LAKES COMMUNITY MEETING SATURDAY NOVEMBER 2 ,2018 – MEETING NOTES." Save Pigeon Lake, 2018. <http://savepigeonlake.com/tri-lakes-community-meeting-saturday-november-2-2018-meeting-notes/>.

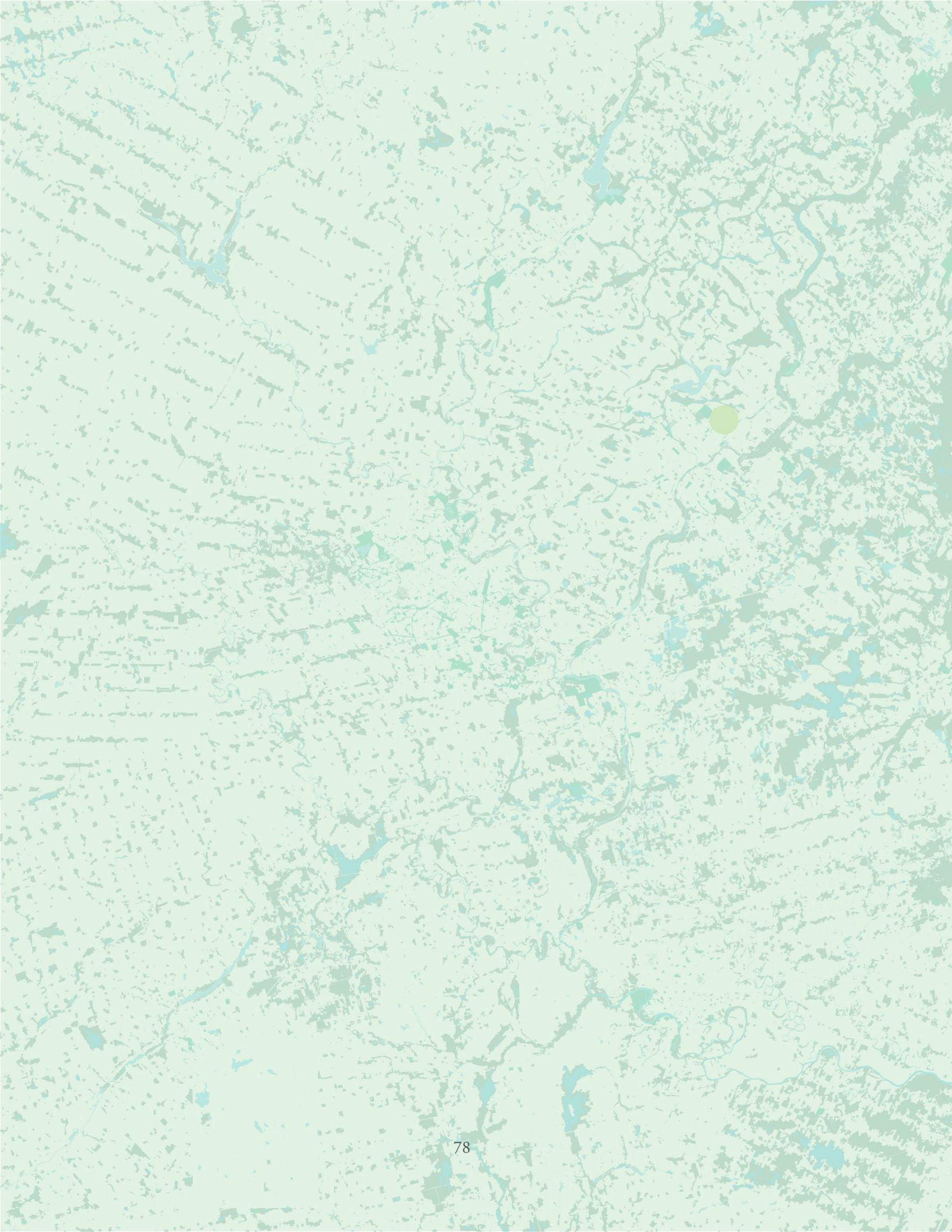
the veracity of the community's historical claims and the anger has resulted in personal criticism, and even vandalism, against the project's participants.<sup>27</sup> This unfortunate example exposes the political realm within which land-based work generally operates. This work has potential to leave tangible traces on, and sometimes disrupt, settler claims to space through simple, daily actions of care and attention: digging, seeding, and harvesting are used to build relations with the land. This human scale is critical, as it allows these projects to operate with or without settler resources, participation, and even permission.

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27 Johnson, Lorraine. "Unsettling the Garden: How Gardening Connects with Reconciliation and Restitution; a Non-Indigenous Gardener's Reflections." Toronto, Toronto and Parkdale Horticultural Societies, 2019.









An aerial photograph of a coastal region, likely a bay or estuary, with a yellow circle highlighting a specific area in the lower-left quadrant. The map shows a mix of land and water, with various shades of green and blue. The text is overlaid on the map.

## *Projections/Plants*

*Projections* or *Flora* spring from the space created by forms of *presence* and *work*. A *projection* is any kind of practical imagining of future space in the present. The projects in this chapter include artworks, landscape works, and architecture projects which facilitate gathering and ceremony, support work, or simply honor long standing traditions of presence. Perceived and practiced ideas of good relations are given material shape through the organization of points and lines on paper, or wood and steel in space. Whether they are speculative or built, these representations open up new possibilities for relating to the urban spaces they occupy.

The projection, or the architecture project, is a kind of seed. A design, usually produced at a remove from the site, is envisioned as a total and then planted. The seed, or drawing set, carries a generative code, a shape of things to come. In the case of actual seeds, this code is shaped by histories of ‘natural’ selection or human breeding. The projection is also shaped by history: literal building codes, precedents, and societal values which inform the design. This is not to say that all projections are benign growths. Far from it, the profession is replete with examples of invasive or maladapted species which disrupt their environments and inhabitants. However, the potential exists for architectures which are better attuned to the places and cultures in which they are planted.



figure 4.1 Drying racks and wigwam shown on a Toronto condominium rooftop in a still from *Biidaabaan*. Image by Lisa Jackson and Mathew Borrett.

## *Orientation | Biidaabaan*

It was a chilly, late September day as I rushed to Nathan Phillip's Square. Duffle-bags in tow for my trip back to Cambridge, I was anxious not to miss my appointment to view *Biidaaban: First Light*. Billed as "an interactive VR project", *Biidaabaan* was drawing a steady stream of visitors to an outdoor pavilion set up in the Square, complete with patio furniture, retractable line-up bollards, and six un-enclosed, semi-private VR "booths." I waited on a plush wicker seat in anticipation, unsure what to expect. The promotional images showed a future Toronto with its towers crumbling, streets flooded, and overgrown with vegetation. Reviews of the piece described the post-apocalyptic affect of these familiar science-fiction motifs,<sup>1</sup> yet the press brief states that "urban life is thriving."<sup>2</sup>

An attendant called my name and brought me to my booth. The noise of the crowded square fell away as they helped me slip on the VR headset and headphones. Ambient noise came in, starting with echoes of running water. The screen read "Tkaronto" before shifting to the more familiar "Toronto." A voice asked a question in what I later learned is Wendat, and subtitles appear in Anishinaabemowin and Mohawk. English text followed, sitting below the other two languages: "'Where did the creator put your people?'" I was now standing in a subway station, but opportunistic flora covers the walls where light creeps in and the train tracks have flooded. I looked around and found evidence of recent human use: canoes sat overturned on the platform and ready for travel in the water.

Before I had time to study the rich detail of the scene, I was taken back aboveground to dusk in the square. Fittingly, real wind blew on my skin. Other forms of life have come to the square, including a turtle, raven, and an aquatic plant species which disrupt the edges of the modernist central pond. I spot more signs of human activity: another canoe, chairs cozily surrounding a fire, a thatch roof structure. I looked up to see the moon. Almost too soon the scene changed again. Only later did I learn that I missed the only actual person in the piece, a woman digging into the ground.

It was nighttime, and I was now high-up on a condominium rooftop. I spent a long time looking out to the changed city outside, gazing up to a surreal field of stars, listening to the insects of the night. Opposite the parapet, silhouettes of tall plants and wooden structures are illuminated by a glowing

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1 Rattan, Chris. "Virtual Reality Film Imagines an Indigenous Future for Toronto." NOW Magazine, 2018. <https://nowtoronto.com/culture/biidaaban-lisa-jackson-virtual-reality/>.

2 National Film Board. "Biidaaban: First Light," 2018. [https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/biidaaban\\_first\\_light/](https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/biidaaban_first_light/).



wigwam-type structure. I was moved inside, where I was able to inspect the tensioned wood structure wrapped in animal-skin sheathing. Gaps in the skin revealed the night sky, and eventually the dome disappeared entirely: I was then floating in space. A new voice spoke in Anishinaabemowin and the text translations returned, formed by dancing fuzzy particles. Unfortunately, I lost the particulars of the speech to the wonder of this dreamy sequence.

It is morning now, the dancing particles still abound. I am still on the rooftop and I now recognize those tall plants as three sisters plant groupings, the wooden structures as crop drying racks. Other towers in the distance are similarly occupied, with cultivated roofs and signs of tended fires. Another voiceover starts, this time in Mohawk, and I look around to see more text floating out in the distance, as well as over the wigwam and by the soil of the rooftop. Two more speakers join in, performing a version of what I later come to know as the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address. They thank the creator and mother earth, among other things. The scene fades to black and English text concludes the piece. The line that stays with me described Biidaaban as “an Anishinaabe word. It refers to the past and the future collapsing in on the present.”

In describing the piece, Jackson emphasizes the role of language in Indigenous culture and what these languages might tell us about this place and its future.<sup>3</sup> I am particularly interested in how Jackson uses architecture and activity to tell that story. If we look at the world she builds as a kind of telescoping of “the past and future,” as opposed to some post-apocalyptic condition, it becomes possible to read it as a kind of design proposal. The uses and re-uses of infrastructures and buildings speak to creative human agency as opposed to an imagined fight for survival. Perhaps those flooded subways were not ravaged by time, but instead actively re-imagined as canals by human stewards. Maybe the preponderance of spontaneous vegetation on sidewalks and towers was not spontaneous at all, but planted or guided into place to create a more livable urban environment.

As with all the stories in *Presence* and *Work*, *Biidaabaan* doesn't call back to an idealized past - it actively engages with the facts of our colonial present, in this case the literal concrete of towers and tunnels, and imagines a way forward. It is a provocative statement of Indigenous futurism; a suggestion of how we might relate to the past.

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3 Astle, Randy. “‘Our Culture Is in Our Language’: Lisa Jackson on Her VR Film *Biidaaban*: First Light and Indigenous Futurism.” *Filmmaker Magazine*, 2018. <https://filmmakermagazine.com/105184-our-culture-is-in-our-language-lisa-jackson-on-her-vr-film-biidaaban-first-light-and-indigenous-futurism/#.Xp9YbmhKiHu>.

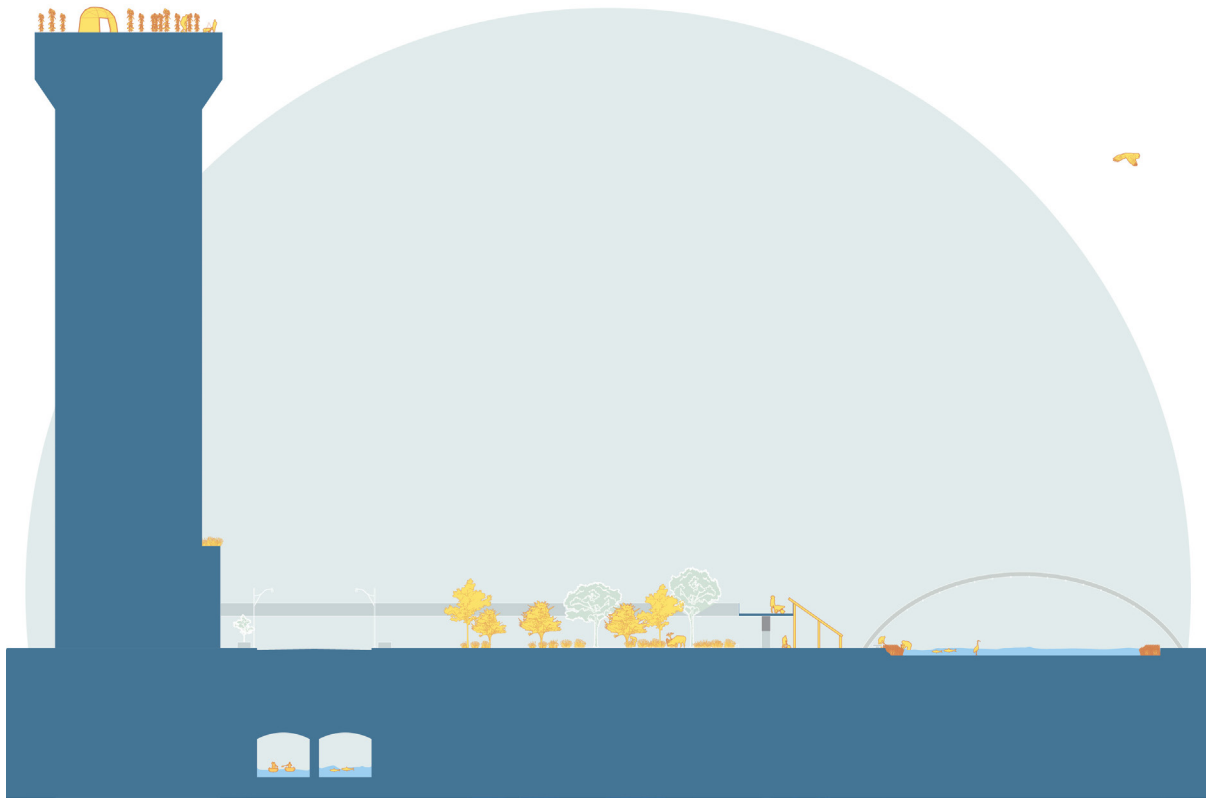


figure 4.2 Reoccupations  
and adaptations of downtown  
Toronto seen in *Biidaabaan*.  
Author's Diagram.





figure 4.3 Hoop Dance Pavilion shot from the southwest, with nascent medicine garden in the foreground and college buildings in the background. Photograph by Tom Arban.

## *Encounter | Hoop Dance Pavilion*

In writing about my motivations for pursuing this research, I made reference to my experience at the Hoop Dance Pavilion on the Mohawk College Campus. I want to return now to this space and attempt to understand why it left such an impact.

Various official project descriptions provide good overviews of the various material elements and symbols that make up the project;<sup>4</sup> 18 five metre timbers arranged in a fifteen metre half circle, tilted to form a conical section and joined at the top with a single curved steel beam; thirteen steel rings, or moons, protruding from the beam; 16 more tilted timbers, longer than the first set, forming a smaller full circle and connected with a another steel beam; two more girders crossing the circle, perpendicular to one another to form a medicine wheel, oriented to the solar north; unfinished wood lathes strapped across the outer columns, providing some slight privacy; a wooden two metre deep bench between the two rings of columns blocking direct entrance from the east and west, interrupted at the southern end to mark a ceremonial entrance; a corten steel fire pit under the centre of the medicine wheel; a constructed pond bordered by roughly hewn boulders; small soil patches for the growth of sage, sweetgrass, tobacco, and a single young cedar planted to round out the four sacred medicines; a larger plot for corn, beans, and squash. These details, imagined using an “inclusive and iterative community consultation process”, provide proof of the value of this kind of co-development. The project eludes obvious formal reference - in the sense that it is not clearly a tipi or wigwam, for example - and does not resort to pictorial elements, like Ojibwe syllabic characters or mythological creatures, to create an “Indigenous space.”

Mohawk College’s Hamilton location sits on an “urban” campus, a five minute drive from downtown, atop the wooded escarpment that divides the city. A fairly recent construction, the campus, and college itself, were established in the mid 1960’s during the legislated creation of a college system for Ontario. Mohawk was chosen to “reflect the wider community” of Hamilton and out of “a preference for Aboriginal names,”<sup>5</sup> but like Seneca College and Algonquin College founded at the same time, the college itself had no particular ties or relationships to local Indigenous populations. These connections developed over time with close proximity to the SNGR and MCFN reserves, partnerships with Six Nations Polytechnic, and growing post-secondary enrolment for indigenous students.

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4 Brook McIlroy. “HOOP Dance Gathering Place / Brook McIlroy | ArchDaily.” ArchDaily, 2019. <https://www.archdaily.com/907647/hoop-dance-gathering-place-brook-mcilroy>.

5 Mohawk College. “Our History.” Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/about-mohawk/leadership-and-administration/our-history>.

The campus property and its buildings sit at about fifteen degrees off true north, aligned with an imposed city grid. This grid runs roughly parallel to the shore of Lake Ontario in order to maximize sellable rectangular plots, an attempt to alienate land from its natural and cultural history. However, the grid is interrupted throughout the city by the Escarpment, so-called “Indian Trails”, creeks, deviations in the shoreline itself, as well as creeks and ravines.

The design of the campus is fairly typical to the higher learning institutions of the mid 20th century. A step away from the symmetry and wide boulevards of older universities, the campus is a dense assemblage of concrete and brick buildings flanked on almost every side by parking lots. The few open spaces on the plot are lawns facing noisy arterial roads, and small courtyard spaces. Generally, these courtyards are just the unplanned niches, alleys, and openings in between a disparate set of buildings.

The Hoop Dance sits in one of the more promising of these accidental gaps; a set of ramps, terraces, and mounds navigating the topography, bounded by older cafeteria and classroom buildings and a newer lounge and library. In a settler colonial context which often sees Indigenous communities, peoples, and practices relegated to the periphery by colonial forces,<sup>6</sup> placing the Pavilion at one of the more intense social intersections on campus might carry special weight. While it is tempting to read this institutional attempt to “honour Aboriginal traditions” as another move to innocence,<sup>7,8</sup> the project is more than an inert visual nod to the area’s history. It is a living, usable space open to ceremonial, social, educational, and spiritual occupation by a plurality of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike. Dedicating so much of the school’s most limited resource, quiet outdoor space, to this kind of project could also signal a more profound shift in thinking than the institutional press quotes imply. That the college, and even the architecture firm, opened the decision-making process up to Indigenous students as well as members and Elders of MCFN and SNGR is further evidence of this shift. This kind of process goes beyond the rote, one-way communication typical to regulated forms of community consultation. It recognizes Indigenous

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6 McGaw, Janet, Anoma Pieris, and Emily Potter. “Indigenous Place-Making in the City: Dispossessions, Occupations and Implications for Cultural Architecture.” *Architectural Theory Review*, 2011. 299.

7 Mohawk College. “The Indigenous Gathering Place (IGP).” Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/indigenous-students/indigenous-gathering-place-igp>.

8 Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012): 1–40. 3.

peoples and communities not as stakeholders to be simply included, and then ignored, in a multicultural planning framework, but as literally central to shared decisions about our future here; one cannot cross the campus without encountering the massive structure and its attendant gardens.

Academic institutions are a relatively safe place to do this kind of work in that their properties do not face market pressure, they are often somewhat secluded from the general public, and they have generally progressive political leanings. Despite all of this, projects like the Hoop Dance Pavilion have added weight in the context of the academy. From producing the techniques and technologies core to territorial expansion and resource extraction,<sup>9</sup> to producing exploitative strains of anthropology concerned with studying Indigenous peoples as subjects,<sup>10</sup> North America's academies are loaded with settler colonial baggage. The traditional academy also privileges "rational" and "scientific" ontologies and epistemologies which allow for the separation of humans and the environment, knowledge and culture, and people from the land. That these institutions have for so long excluded Indigenous people and world-views only adds to this context. Mohawk College is not unique in that the architecture of the campus follows these divides: teaching is kept in cellular classrooms, studying happens at a library desk, and so on. It is significant, then, that the College labeled the Hoop Dance Pavilion a "classroom." This minor note is an institutional legitimization of the way the Pavilion collapses ideas of learning, spirituality, healing, and gathering. It is a space where a sacred fire can be tended while students learn to harvest squash, all in plain view of the campus at large. Indigenous songs of celebration can fill the courtyard and bleed into the classrooms above. It is these kinds of affordances, as much as the soaring timber and steel structure, that point us to another way of thinking about the space of the campus.

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9 Nadasdy, Paul. "The Politics of TEK: Power and the 'Integration' of Knowledge." *Arctic Anthropology* 36, no. 1–2 (1999): 1–18. 5.

10 Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Second edi. London ; New York: Zed Books, 2012. 11.

figure 4.4 Hoop Dance Pavilion shown at the Mohawk College Campus, with detail showing solar orientation, cedar tree, and pond. Author's diagram.









figure 4.5 Regional map showing projects among rivers, lakes, forests, and parklands. Author's diagram with data from Open Street Maps.

## *Constellation of Projections*

The scales of both Biidaabaan and the Hoop Dance Pavilion necessitate the inclusion of a broad set of collaborators and communities. The process of Biidaabaan saw Jackson's work and vision supported by settler artists and technicians. The Hoop Dance Pavilion was initiated by a settler institution to support Indigenous students and was designed by a largely settler architecture firm, albeit one with a nascent Indigenous Design Studio<sup>11</sup> and growing ranks of Indigenous architects, working in close collaboration with Indigenous communities. Considering these networks raises questions for what qualifies as Indigenous spatial practice, especially with regards to architecture. Is it about the agency of the client or community, the authorship of the artist or designers, the intentions or attitudes with which the work is carried out, or the affordances for other spatial practices it creates? In this (post)colonial milieu, and even more so in urban contexts, easy answers to these questions are rare. The projects below all operate in a similarly liminal space.

Trillium Park [1] in Toronto is an example of Indigenous inclusion in an otherwise normative design framework. One of the most interesting parts of this story is former Chief Carolyn King's insistence that "any new park in Ontario needs to include First Nations."<sup>12</sup> Completed in 2017 and designed by LandINC, Trillium Park responded to this call by integrating Indigenous artwork and infrastructures into key areas of the new park adjacent to Ontario Place. The most significant of these moves is a "Ravine" of heavy granite slabs marking the entrance to the park, which also announces the historical and contemporary of Indigenous peoples in Toronto with a pair of massive moccasins carved into the stone (fig. 4.4). This is the first landscape-scale expression of King's Moccasin Identifier Project<sup>13</sup>, an on-going effort to mark Indigenous presence at sites in the GTA and beyond with stencilled moccasins belonging to the specific nations and people. Other such features are a number of marker trees and a fire-pit with potential for use in ceremony, although the park's web-page advertises it as a bonfire pit. Apart from these examples, the park is a collection of landscape features generally adopting a naturalized aesthetic, replete with climate-appropriate indigenous plant species and locally sourced boulders. These kind of symbolic integrations are significant in a major new park in a large metropolitan city. However, as these are fairly surface treatments in a relatively remote park, it remains to be seen whether these various markers of presence will become important community fixtures or remain simply as evidence of consultation.

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11 Brook McIlroy. "Story | Brook McIlroy," 2020. <https://brookmcilroy.com/story/>.

12 Johnson, Lorraine. "Parks: Ancient Connections." Ground, 2018. [https://www.oala.ca/ground\\_articles/parks-2/](https://www.oala.ca/ground_articles/parks-2/).

13 Morgan, Adam. "Moccasin Identifier Project." Alternatives Journal, June 20, 2019. <https://www.alternativesjournal.ca/people-and-profiles/moccasin-identifier-project>.

The renovation of an office building for a new Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) center [2], led by Levitt Goodman Architectural Partners, was the product of a more familiar architect-client relationship. As a project designed explicitly for the use of Toronto's urban Indigenous community<sup>14</sup>, the project did not see the same questions of consultation and integration with a larger civic body seen in Trillium Park. The tension of cross-cultural representation was still present, however, in that the renovated center had to serve the diverse Indigenous peoples of contemporary Toronto. The interiors of the project address this diversity with tile and timber interpretations of cultural forms and textiles, and the architects engaged 7th Generation Image Makers, an arts and media program operating in the NCFST, in the creation of wall-scale vinyl images<sup>15</sup>. Echoing the condo adaptation seen in *Biidaabaan*, the center's rooftop patio features a carefully designed assemblage of beds for food and sacred medicine as well as a healing lodge and fire circle (fig. 4.5). While the rooftop is used exclusively by clients and staff, there is a visible connection to the offices and apartments which rise up around the center. This small oasis of Indigenous presence and healing in a landscape dominated by pavement and skyscrapers is another assertion of "the right to the centre."<sup>16</sup>

The Canary District Indigenous Hub (fig. 4.6), a massive upcoming development adjacent to Toronto's Distillery District, brings new wrinkles into the client-architect relationship [3]. The project is a mixed-use proposal on a 0.7 acre site recently purchased by Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT), an Indigenous health services organization focused on centering care around traditional practice and knowledge. While AHT's new four storey Indigenous Community Health Centre (IHC) is the centerpiece of the proposal, the organization has partnered with a trio of development corporations to fill out the site with two buildings for condominiums, rental apartments, office space, and commercial retail space. The site will also see a second four storey centre shared by organizations such as Miziwe Biik and Indspire.<sup>17</sup> While the financial nature of the agreement is unclear, partnerships between Indigenous landholders and developers are gaining traction, especially in Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>18</sup> This kind of joint venture is probably

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14 Bozikovic, Alex. "NO MEAN CITY: Native Child and Family Services." Spacing Toronto, March 22, 2011. <http://spacing.ca/toronto/2011/03/22/no-mean-city-native-child-and-family-services-by-levitt-goodman/>.

15 Bozikovic, "NO MEAN CITY".

16 McGaw, Janet, Anoma Pieris, and Emily Potter. "Indigenous Place-Making", 300.

17 UrbanToronto. "West Don Lands: Block 10 Indigenous Hub," 2020. <https://urbantoronto.ca/database/projects/west-don-lands-block-10-indigenous-hub>.

18 Livesey, Biddy. Do Urban Growth Strategies Support the Development of Māori Land for Residential



critical in allowing AHT to provide this bevy of services in a new facility in such a rapidly developing part of the city. Indeed, the ICHC - a collaboration between Quadrangle and Two Row Architects - is slated to provide amenities like doctor's offices and a sweat lodge in a purpose-built and culturally sensitive project. It will be interesting to see, however, whether the "Indigenous expressions"<sup>19</sup> considered in the design of the centre will extend to the rest of the development. Despite a stated goal for the "larger block to... reference the large Indigenous population," early renderings reveal fairly typical residential and office towers: perhaps unsurprisingly, Two Row Architects was not engaged as a consultant for the larger masterplan. Parts of the Hub clearly represent and allow for Indigenous spatial practice at a vastly different scale, but it is worth considering how or if the market-oriented elements of such developments can be more deeply aligned with the world-views of their proponents.

A proposed laboratory building at the University of Guelph (UoG) shows us how that kind of close alignment might look in an institutional setting. *Nokom's House* [4] is a proposed research facility for a group of Indigenous academics at UoG spearheaded by Dr. Kim Anderson, whose research generally focuses on Indigenous family health. The project is currently in a proposal stage with the support of schematic design study by local architecture firm JL Richards and Associates. The vision is centered on creating a familial space for a kitchen table where researchers can meet with community members and grandmothers, or *nokomis* in Anishinaabemowin, over tea and food. The proposed site is in UoG's expansive Arboretum, the relatively small *Nokom's House* will include a private room for consultation as well as a kitchen for research on traditional food and nutrition. The physical space of the lab is envisioned as a small part of a broader land-based research agenda supported by the ecology of the Arboretum. This larger vision includes affirming Indigenous connections to the land in a number of ways, including through a permanent ceremonial fire and the harvesting of foods and medicines. Creating this kind of space and legitimizing these forms of knowledge transfer as research in an academic setting has such impact that the actual architecture of the building almost seems secondary. However, early community presentations of the design have been well received by Elders. The designers, guided by the research group and in coordination with Amina Lalor, a Métis University of Waterloo architecture student and one of Dr. Anderson's research assistants, were charged with respectfully acknowledging the relations present at the site. This resulted in a sustainability oriented

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Use? Tāone Tupu Ora: Indigenous Knowledge and Sustainable Urban Design, 2010.

19 Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Quadrangle Architects, Stantec, and Two Row Architect. "West Don Lands Block 10: Schematic Design." Toronto, 2019.





figure 4.6 Trillium Park's granite "valley" with stone-carved moccasin identifiers. Image via Philip Cote.



figure 4.7 NCSFT rooftop garden with ceremonial fire and lodge. Image by A-Frame Inc.

figure 4.8 Rendering of the Canary District Indigenous Hub with Health Centre in the foreground. Image from Quadrangle.



figure 4.9 Promotional illustration for Nokom's House. Image by Amina Lalor.



figure 4.10 Axes and alignments for Bill Woodworth's schematic First Nations Grove. Drawing by Bill Woodworth.



building distinguished by a strong east-west axis formed by heavy mass walls, large windows and clerestories for daylighting (or letting in the sun), and opportunities for natural ventilation (or allowing the wind through the space).<sup>20</sup> While not as centrally-located as the Hoop Dance Pavilion at Mohawk College Nokom's House, through this web of spatial considerations translated thus far by Settler architects, presents its own challenge to the Western academy.

Reversing the common pattern of settler architect supporting an Indigenous community, Dr. William Woodworth's "First Nations Grove"[5] is a case of an Indigenous designer envisioning a support for settler newcomers. In the early 2000's Woodworth, a professor of architecture, Mohawk traditionalist, and advocate, exhibited his plan for a ceremonial Condolence ground on the Toronto Island. The scheme was sparked by his rereading of Toronto's downtown not as an drastically altered landscape, but as a construction guided by ancestral spirits.<sup>21</sup> In this conceptual re-framing the CN Tower becomes the prophesied Haudenosaunee Great Treat of Peace<sup>22</sup>, with other skyscrapers and even city parks also acting as emblems of other ancestral memories. This re-contextualization of Toronto's concrete as an Indigenous creation is fascinating spatial maneuver in its own right. Although Woodworth is speaking from a Haudenosaunee perspective, albeit one that acknowledges Anishinaabe relations to the region, he describes these patterns as fitting into "great cycles of return" not dissimilar from the "Anishinaabe time" I reflected on in *Presence*. For Woodworth, part of this return is the taking up by Indigenous peoples of the responsibility to support "the overwhelming number of people who are found wandering on their lands." The Grove was imagined as a year-long push towards re-imagining this responsibility, an architectural installation for the resetting of relationships between the diverse peoples and non-human actors of the city. While the plan has yet to come to fruition, Woodworth's written programs contains some notable tectonic details, including: a central lodge constructed as "a great inverted basket woven into the upward reaches of an isolated poplar tree;" the use of barks, sinews, mosses, and saps, as building materials; two contemporary longhouses with room for all-season occupation built with the methods of "the dominant culture;" and, significantly, a focus on a light on-the-ground impact and eventual disassembly through a ceremonial burning of the structures.

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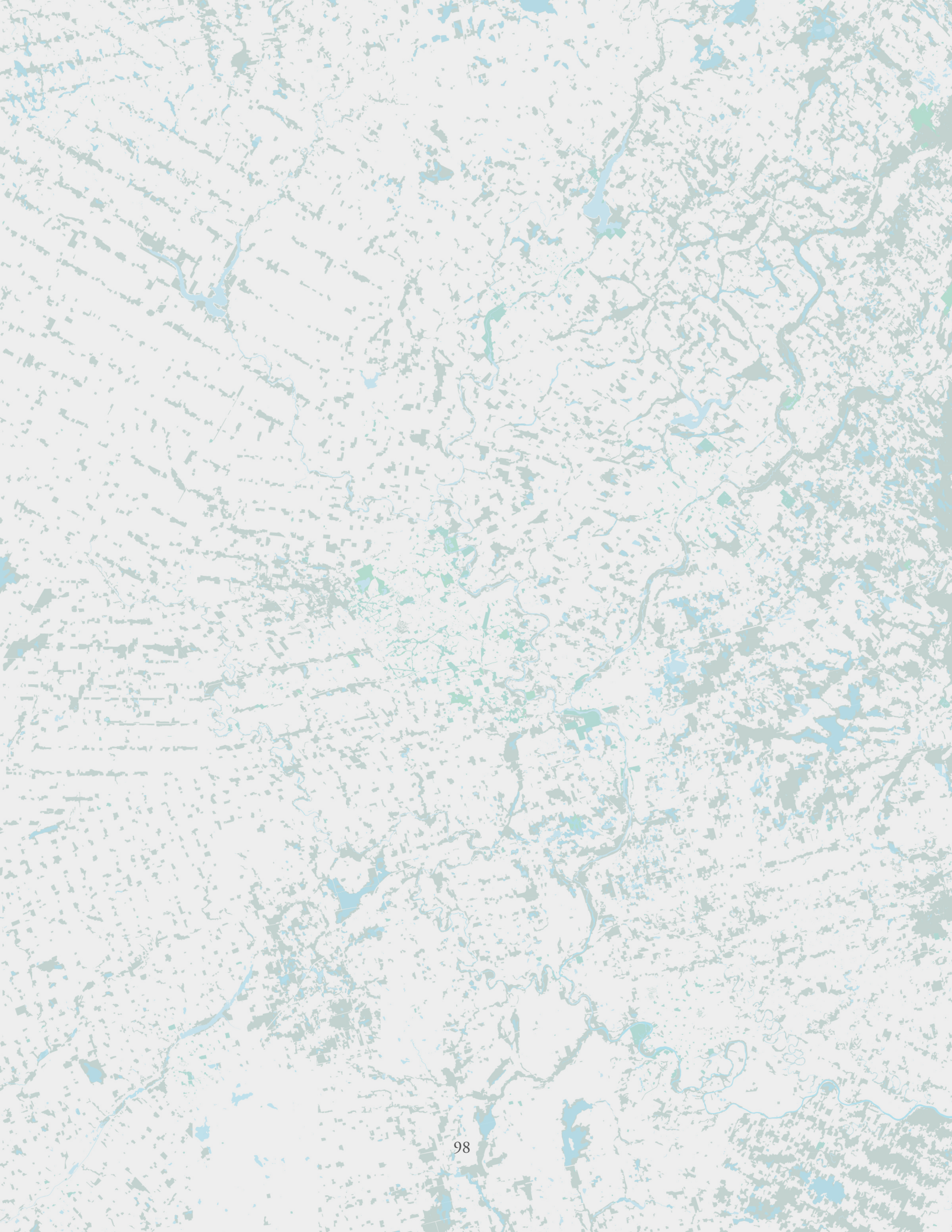
20 Andersen, Kim, Longboat Sheri, Brittany Luby, and JL Richards & Associates. "Nokom's House: Community Design Review Workshops." Guelph, 2019.

21 Woodworth Raweno:kwaw, William. "Iroquoian Condolence Practised on a Civic Scale." In *Alliances : Re/Envisioning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships*, edited by Lynne Davis, 25–56, 2010. 29.

22 Freeman, Victoria. "Indigenous Hauntings in Settler-Colonial Spaces." In *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence*, edited by Colleen E Boyd and Coll Thrush, 209–47. University of Nebraska Press, 2011.











## *Conclusion*



## *Revisiting Minjimendan*

In order to explore some of the ideas explored in *Presence*, *Work*, and *Projection*, I wanted to return to *Minjimendan*, the case study with which I had the most personal involvement. The following section presents sketches of how the project might have expanded over time, a sort of response to the work. This act itself is a kind of *projection* which imagines the kinds of gatherings, groundworks, and even structures, might be engendered by or further support the project as it grows. This is far from a resolved solution to perceived issues, but rather a way to explore how the relationships, or tectonics, already present might be strengthened in a respectful manner.

The following sketches are meant to convey a thought process rather than finished proposals. They contain notional ideas about basic program: a tool shed, seed storage, classroom space, a greenhouse for sprouts and saplings. Ideas about form and material are expressed simply, with more attention paid to relationships between building and ground, and program to time.

My first thought was that any intervention should have a light footprint on the ground and embody a respectful impermanence with a sensitivity to material life-cycle and use. This led me initially to explore helical screw-pile foundations supporting a raised timber structure which would involve minimal soil disturbance and be easy to disassemble (fig. 5.3). I questioned whether the building's height should be kept minimal, or whether the building should be raised from the ground with taller pilotis to make space for certain low-light plant species. The steel for the helical piles was another concern: does a lighter footprint and recycling capabilities justify its use over concrete foundations, or does the mineral extraction and embodied carbon of its production make other strategies more palatable<sup>1</sup>? Accordingly, other sketches explore the possibility of driven timber piles, or rammed earth foundations. Other tangible concerns at this stage centered around the project's relationship to air, water, and sunlight (fig. 5.3). Should the roof collect precipitation for use or carefully shed water into the garden's swales? Could the various layers of enclosure expand to create shaded outdoor spaces? Alternatively, would the building be more useful if it left as much space as possible to the garden?

Working in isolation, I also struggled with whether, or to what extent, the architecture should reflect the garden's Indigenous stewardship. Would a contemporary timber structure designed with the "right

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<sup>1</sup> Blander, Akiva. "When a Building Comes Down, Where Do Its Materials Go?" Metropolis, January 2019.

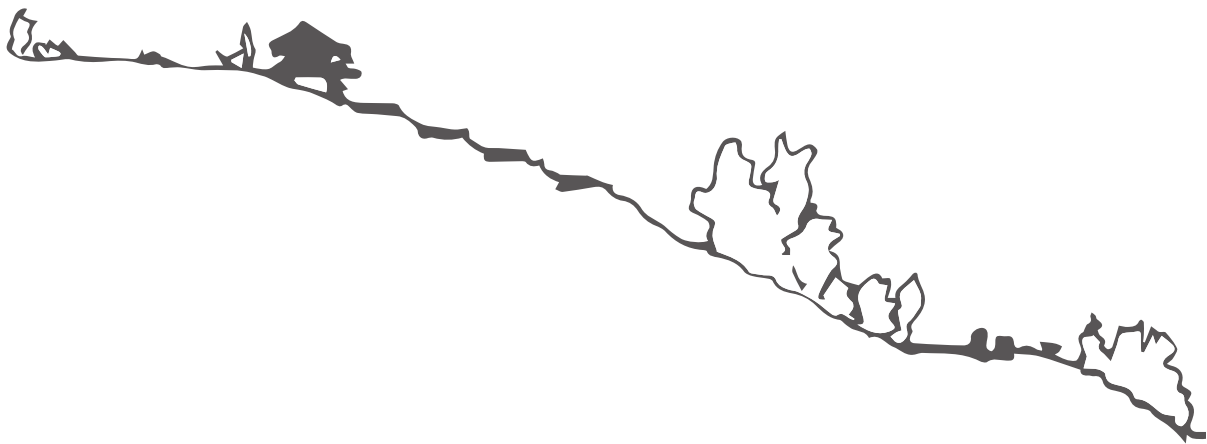


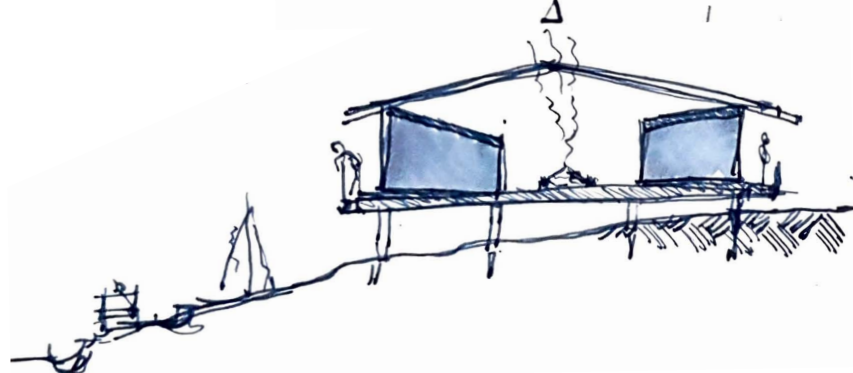
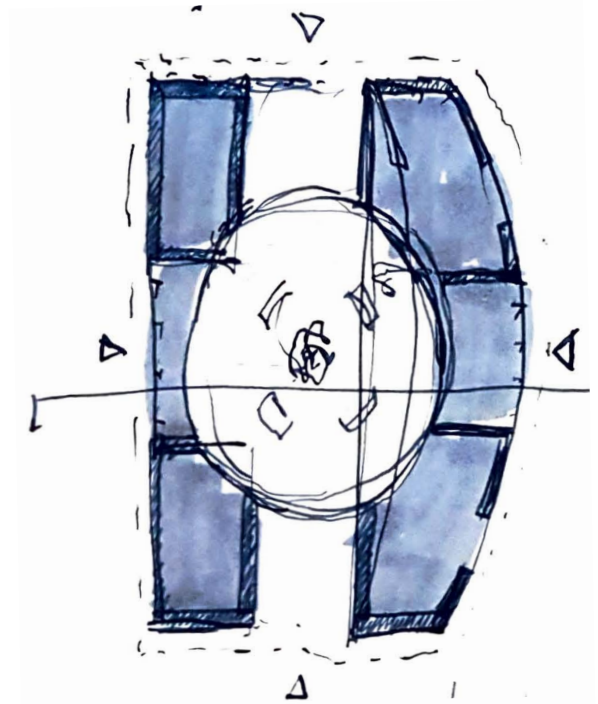
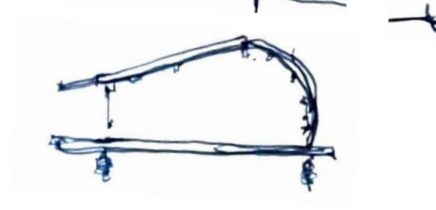
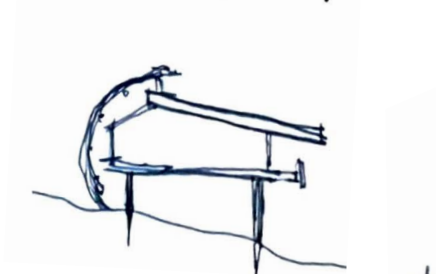
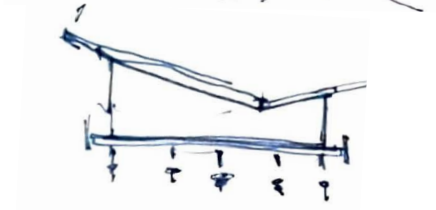
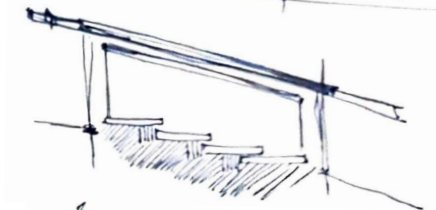
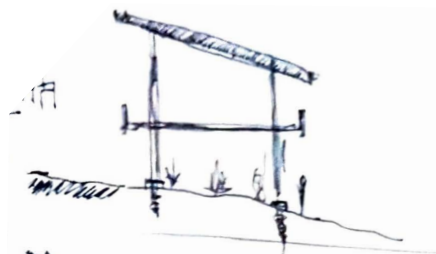
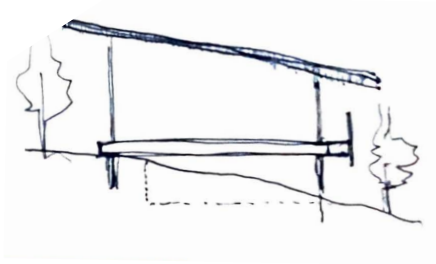
figure 5.1 Above: Site section sketch showing terraced gardens, existing forest buffer between *rare* and highway.

figure 5.2 Middle-right: Sectional sketches exploring building relationships to ground, envelope and roof studies.

figure 5.3 Right: Schematic plan and section exploring adjacency of two program groups, common sheltered outdoor fire-pit.



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intentions” towards land be sufficient, or should the design incorporate building techniques and patterns which would have been traditional to the region? Would this kind of integration even be appropriate coming from a settler architect? While the questions of style and representation were outside the scope of this thesis, I wondered if other concepts might achieve a similar end. In a nod to Minjimendan’s coexistence with the settler community gardens on the property, the sketches in figure 5.4 explore a “two row” scheme where a central gathering space is flanked by two distinct edges of enclosed program.

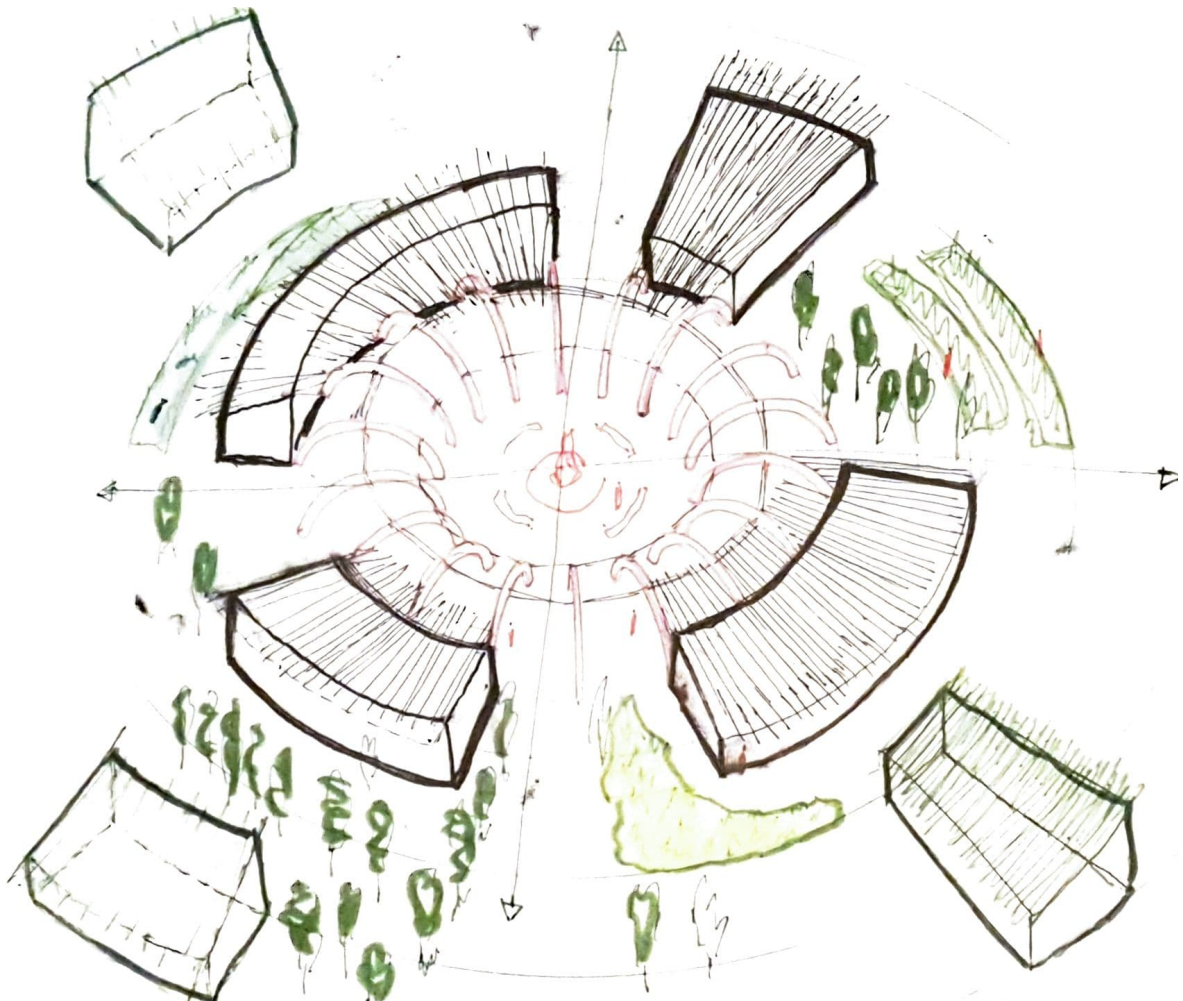
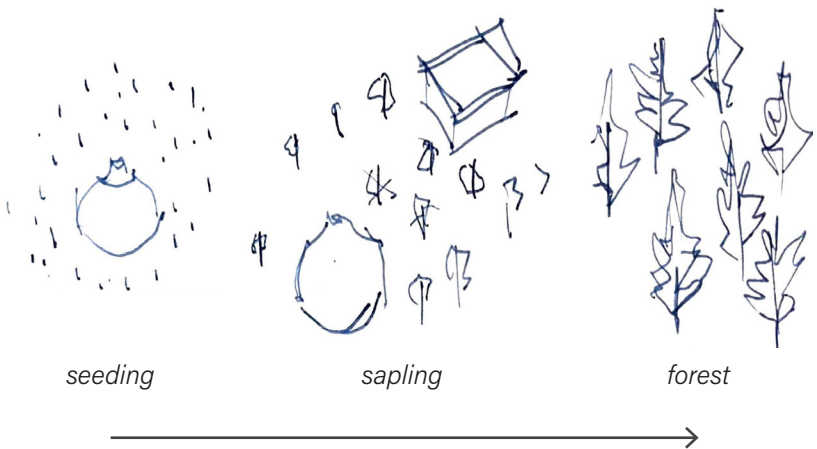
As the removable helical screw piles hinted at, I felt it important to bring longer time scales into project. If the first few sketches presented a static building dropped into an existing landscape, I wanted to consider how the building might be small part of rehabilitating a larger ecosystem. Sketch 5.5 explores how any new buildings at Minjimendan might be temporary supports for the maintenance of a burgeoning food forest. A small building is placed while sapling are planted, and as the forest grows so too might the program. The clearing of dead or out-competed trees might provide the raw materials for new structures, the reintroduction of traditional plant and animal relations might necessitate space for unexpected forms of craft. Perhaps once the forest is mature and in need of a controlled burn, the light wooden structures could disappear with the flames, having served their purpose.

I also explored whether this kind of phased approach could have a more centralized expression and allow for a certain kind of community input. Sketch 5.6 presents buildings radiating outwards from a central ceremonial fire, with new structures cropping up or being dismantled as need wanes and waxes. This scheme suggests how a framework for expansion and demolition could serve the unexpected needs and ambitions of the community stewarding the garden in a coherent manner.

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figure 5.4 Right: Author's sketch showing phased "forest" scheme.

figure 5.5 Below: Author's sketch showing phased "central fire" scheme.



These initial sketches made implicit, intuitive use of the learning from the chapters of *Presence*, *Work*, and *Projection*, but still emphasize architecture as the primary space-producing activity. I wanted to explore how treating these concepts as discrete layers of the site might produce a new understanding of the project and point to a more relational working method.

Starting with presence and our relations to time, how are people brought together at the site currently? Currently, gardeners gather sporadically at their plots, small workshops are held in the North House, Don Russell's *Stone, Clay, Fire* installation allows for large sharing circles, the staked-out conceptual longhouse allows for group teachings on Iroquoian society and building practice, and Andrew Judge gathers volunteers and community at Minjimendan for lessons on soil and relation. Projecting forward, what kind of affordances for gathering might be important? Perhaps year-round occupation of the site is important for a long-term sense of "reclamation"<sup>2</sup>, necessitating winterized buildings for teaching or lodging. Maybe the existing capacity for smaller scale person to person knowledge transfer and egalitarian group discussions would need to be supplemented by room for lecturing and performance to a larger audience.

Current forms of *work* at the site include individual community gardening and the activity at Minjimendan. Future possibilities for expanding land-based relations at the site might include; summer-time medicine harvesting in the forested area to the north of the garden; maple-tapping in the early spring; ; seeding, maintenance, and controlled burning of a future food forest; clay tamping for the establishment of a solid floor at the conceptual longhouse; continual clearing of weeds at the fire circle; digging extensions of Minjimendan's swales and terraced beds along the topography; flooding the low point of the site for an aquaculture pond.

Foregrounding *presence* and *work* clarifies the location, role, and necessity of any new structures. If less formalized knowledge-transfer can happen in the warmer months amidst the garden, a new classroom can be designed to support winter-time education and research. Speculating on the possible forms of harvesting practices at the site provides guidance on the relevant infrastructures; dry pantries for long

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2 Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 22.



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term seed storage, a working kitchen for food and medicine preparation; a green-house nurturing saplings for a reforestation project; deployable winter lodging structures to accommodate the long hours of maple-tapping; a deck over a newly flooded pond in support of larger gatherings at the garden.

While these are far from groundbreaking or resolved spatial considerations, this attitude or ethic towards community is critical if architecture is to support truly (post)colonial practices and futures.

figure 5.6 Axonometric diagram of Springbank Farm showing adjacencies and context.

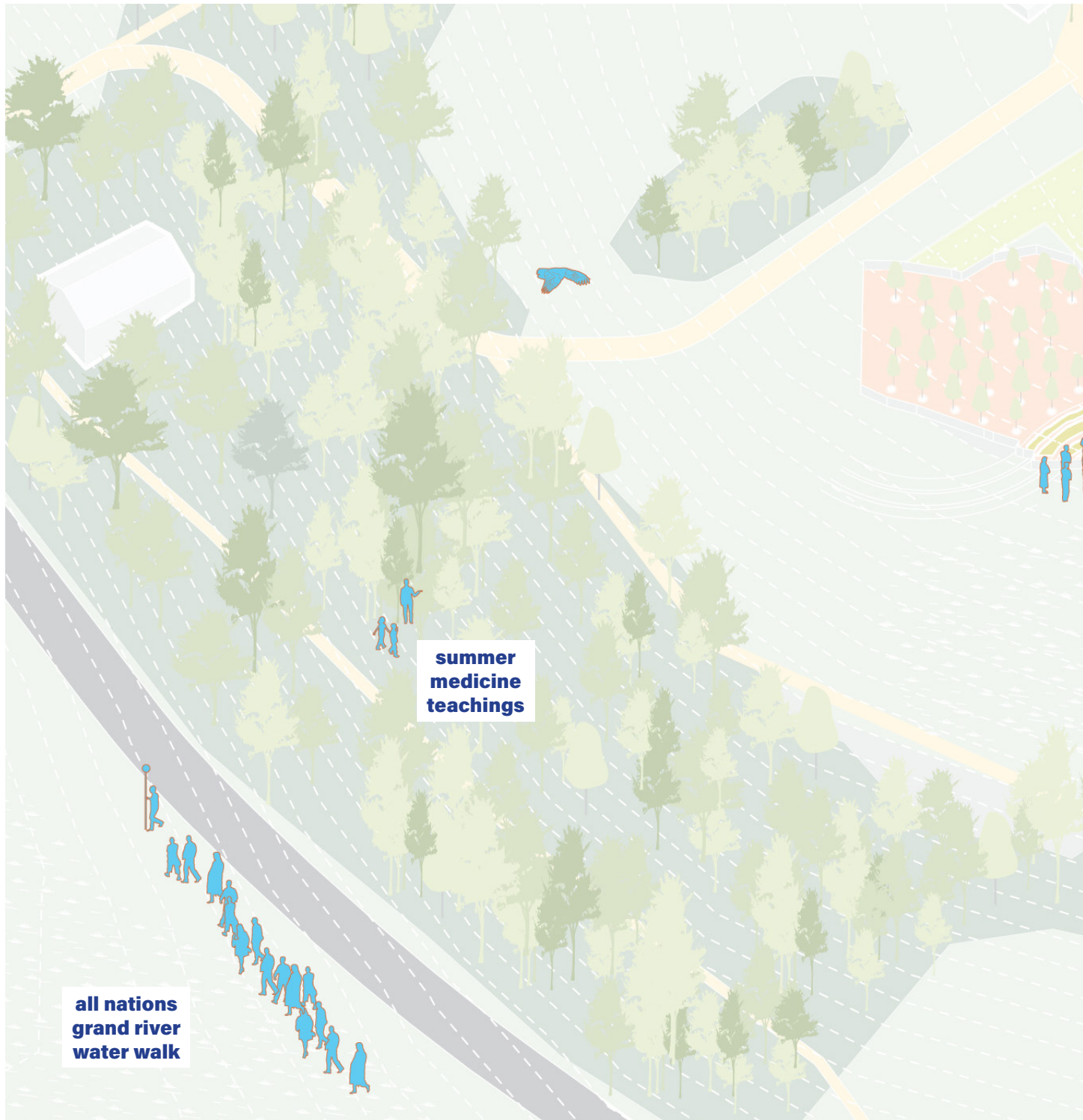


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figure 5.7 Axonometric diagram of Springbank Farm showing presences.





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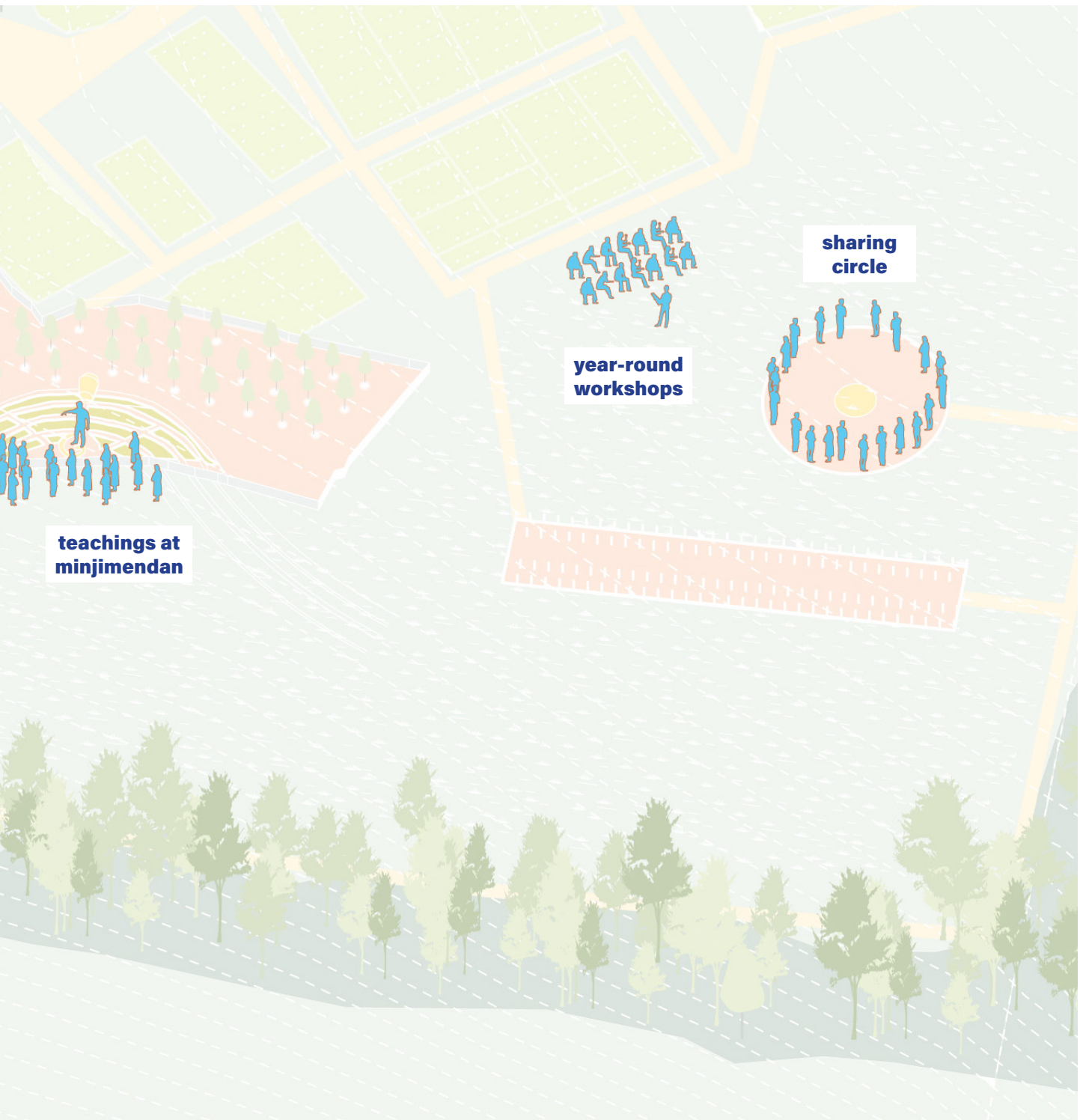
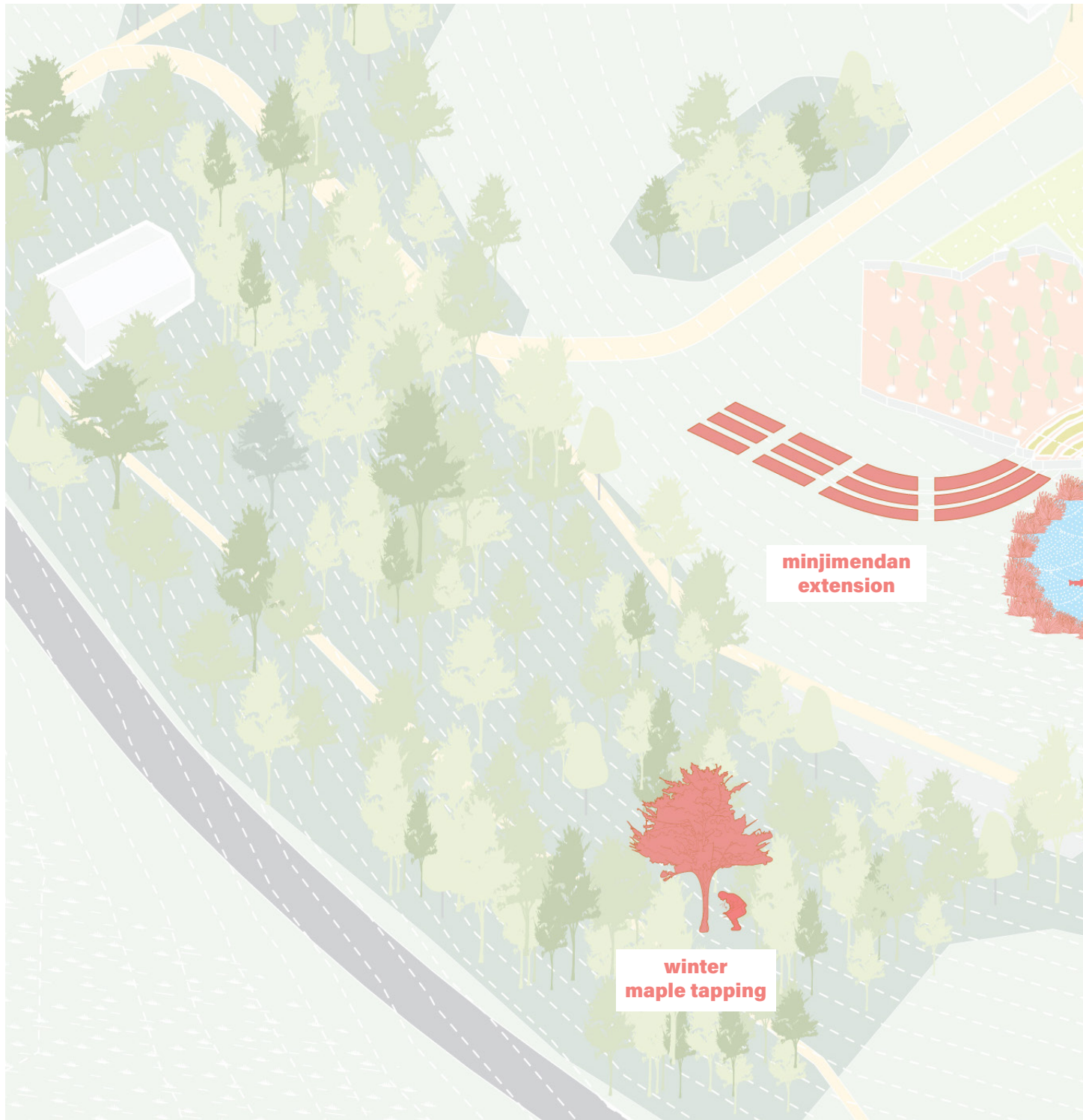


figure 5.8 Axonometric diagram of Springbank Farm showing works.





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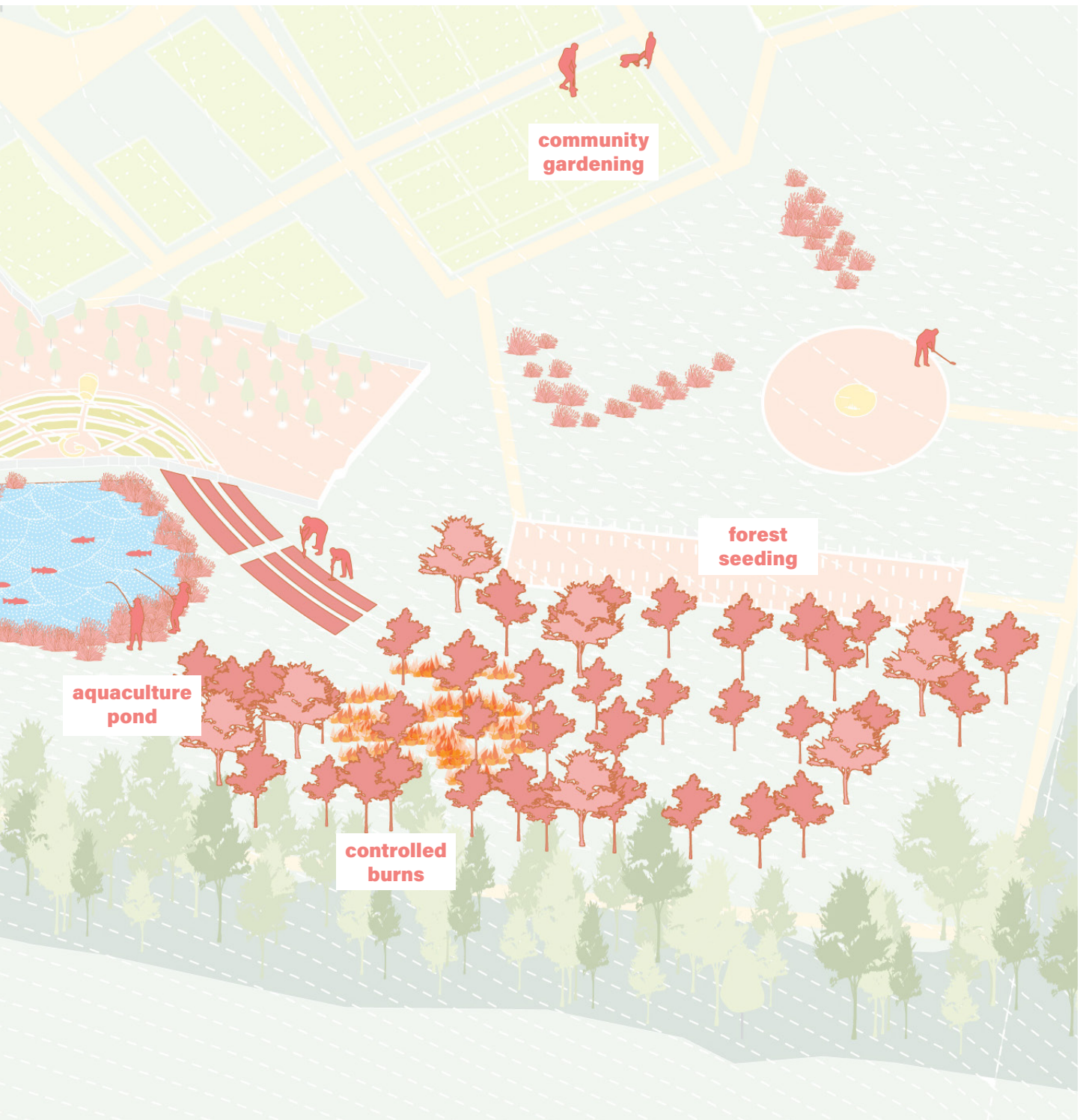


figure 5.9 Axonometric diagram of Springbank Farm showing projections.





## Conclusion

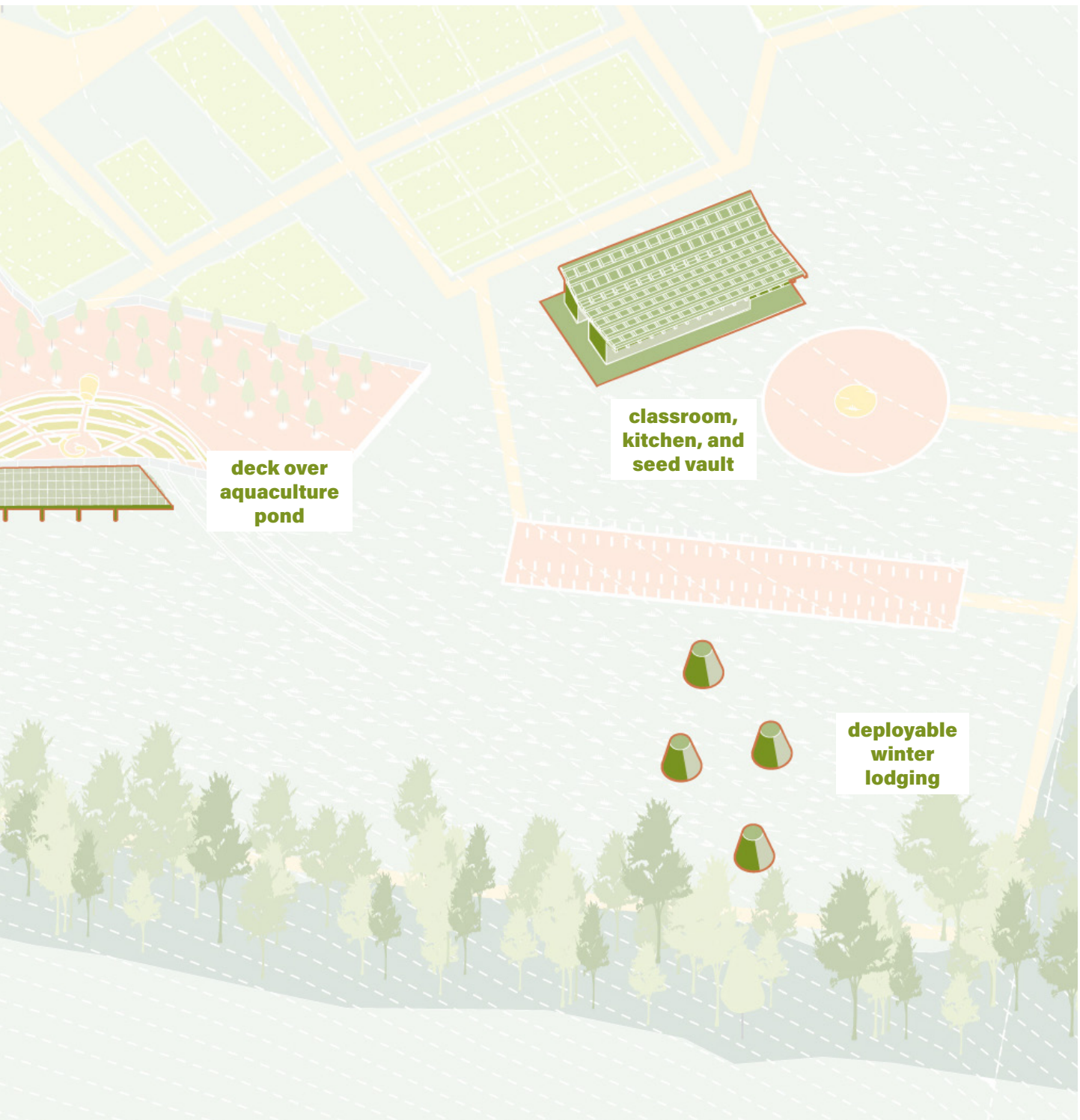
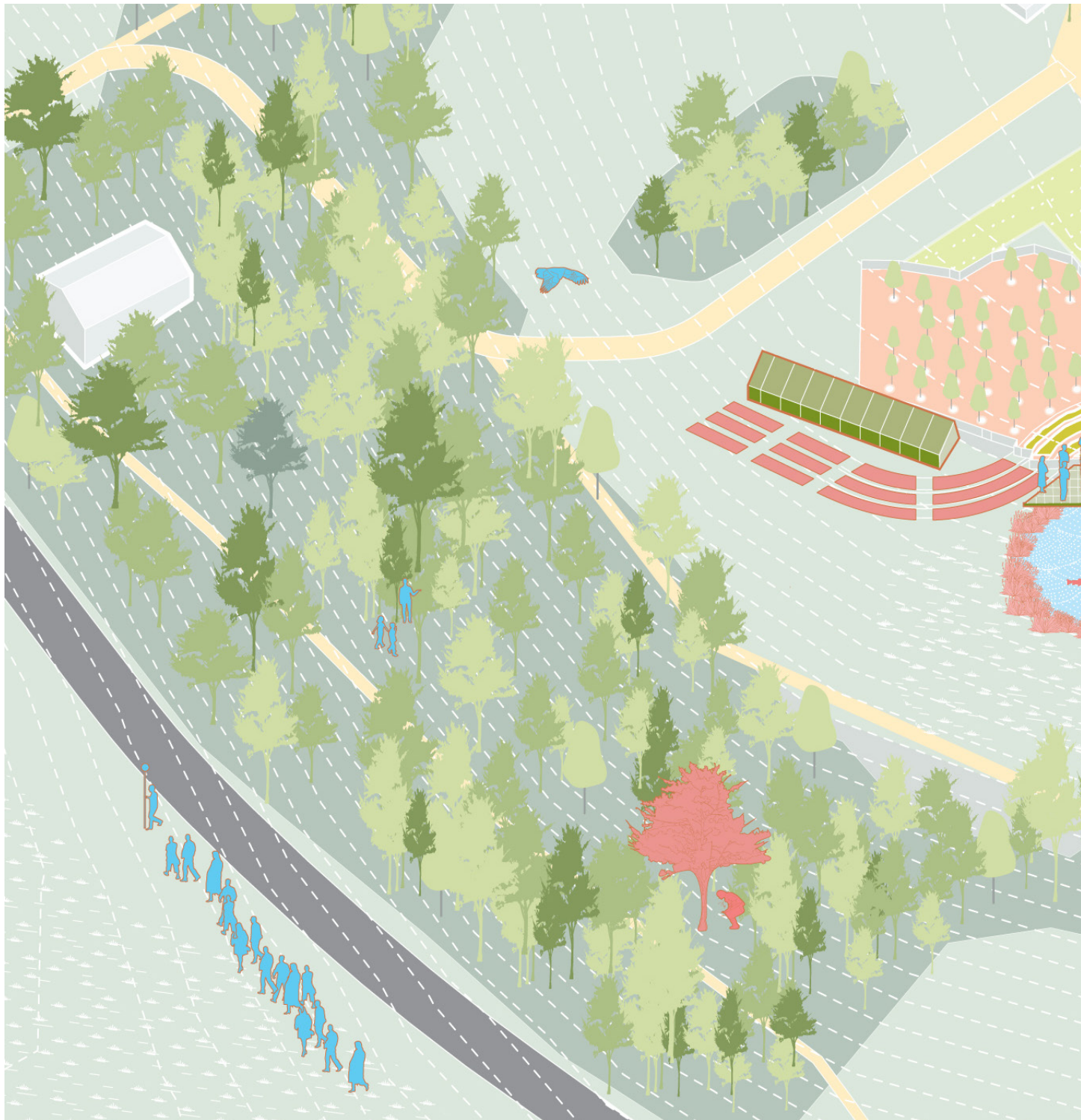


figure 5.10 Axonometric diagram of Springbank Farm showing all 3 “layers”.





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figure 5.11 Wet'suwet'en  
solidarity blockade at Dundas  
and Jane Streets in Toronto.  
Photograph by Erica Vella.



## *Looking On*

As I finalized the body of this thesis, changing circumstances brought issues to the fore which lay outside of my scope. I want to address them here to emphasize the fluidity of this (post)colonial condition.

Earlier this year, solidarity actions occurred across turtle island in support of land defenders at Wet'suwet'en, a community embroiled in a years-long controversy over a pipeline which was proposed to cut through traditional Wet'suwet'en territories. A simmering years-long legal battle exploded into a civil rights crisis when the RCMP conducted raids to enforce court injunctions against land defenders in Wet'suwet'en territory.<sup>3</sup> While all manner of solidarity action were carried out in streets and squares across the country, rail blockades were more succesful at catching the attention of politicians and popular media. Fascinatingly, these nimble gatherings - perhaps their own form of presence - had an asymmetrical impact on perhaps the most iconic of colonial infrastructures and tools, the rail road. Small groups of concerned individuals were able to impact massive networks of commerce and transportation. While the most long standing blockades occurred on reserve lands such as Tyendinaga, shorter actions also took place on tracts of rail in urban areas like Toronto.<sup>4</sup> While I can't address the complexity of the issue here, I want to point out the intricate set of debates and concepts that these actions brought to the mainstream; intra-community struggles between extractive resource development benefits which might support members and environmental (and therefore cultural) preservation; deep questions around traditional indigenous governance and Indian Act band councils;<sup>5</sup> debates over what responsibilities and rights actually come with "aboriginal rights and title".<sup>6</sup> Some settlers reacted to these actions with anger and racism,<sup>7</sup> for others nothing changed, but for others these questions (and the interruption of rail service) began to draw out the oppressive basis of their presence, activity, and wealth, on this land.

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3 Richardson, Catherine. "Raid of Wet'suwet'en Part of Canada's Ongoing Police Violence against Indigenous Peoples." *The Conversation*, February 2020.

4 Cowen, Deborah. "#shutcanadadown: Anti-Colonial Counterlogistics for Indigenous Sovereignty." *The Funambulist* 28 (2020): 2-4.

5 Baker, Rafferty. "A Who's Who of the Wet'suwet'en Pipeline Conflict." *CBC News*, February 2020.

6 Pasternak, Shiri. "Wet'suwet'en: Why Are Indigenous Rights Being Defined by an Energy Corporation? - Yellowhead Institute." *Yellowhead Institute*, February 2020.

7 Sterritt, Angela. "Rise in Anti-Indigenous Racism and Violence Seen in Wake of Wet'suwet'en Protests" *CBC News*, February 2020.

Much of this solidarity movement has had to move online. With the global spread of COVID-19, these kinds of gatherings, like many others, are no longer safe. There is a tendency to call the public health crisis we find ourselves in today unprecedented. Of course, a cursory glance at colonial history reveals many similar stories throughout the last five centuries. Smallpox and other diseases imported by European settlers decimated Indigenous communities across the continent, facilitating colonial claims to these lands.<sup>8</sup> Western society is adapting to relatively lax limits on our mobility and activity, but the pass system and the Indian Act controlled Indigenous movement on/off reserves and made illegal all manner of cultural practice.<sup>9</sup> These patterns continue to play out in today's pandemic. Already facing medical inequalities and government-neglected clean water infrastructures, many First Nations reserves (and reservations in the United States) are facing state pressure to dismantle self-initiated road blockades and checkpoints aimed at protecting their communities.<sup>10, 11</sup>

Despite the intergenerational trauma tied to these histories and present conditions, the kinds of gatherings I looked at in my thesis persist and are flourishing. This is a testament to the importance of these practices, as well as the resilience of these communities and worldviews.

Unfortunately, much of the work I detailed has gone on hold for now. It has also revealed the still colonial conditions underlying these practices. Minjimendan, for example, had its activities suspended amidst widespread distancing measures. Later, *rare* officially thanked Minjimendan for its efforts and stated that “we look forward to seeing the Minjimendan project flourish in a new location.”<sup>12</sup> While the nature of the decision is not public, this development underlines that much of the work I described still relies on the goodwill and cooperation of settler individuals, organizations, and institutions.

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8 Miller, J. R. *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Native-Newcomer Relations in Canada*, Fourth Edition. University of Toronto Press, 2018. 58-59.

9 Smith, Keith D. *Liberalism, Surveillances and Resistance : Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927*. The West Unbound : Social and Cultural Studies. Edmonton, Alberta: AU Press, 2009. 60.

10 Bergen, Rachel. “First Nations Partners of Keeyask ‘not Backing down’ from Blockades over COVID-19 Fears | CBC News.” CBC News, May 2020.

11 Lakhani, Nina. “South Dakota Governor Threatens to Sue over Sioux’s Coronavirus Roadblocks | US News | The Guardian.” The Guardian, May 2020.

12 *rare sites*. “Community Gardens : Rare Charitable Research Reserve.” *rare*, 2020.

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figure 5.12 Author assisting with the paused expansion of the planter beds at Minjimendan, October 2019. Photograph by Amina Lalor.





figure 5.13 Author planting  
beans at Minjimendan, April  
2019. Photograph by Amina  
Lalor.



## *Giving Thanks*

I want to close by acknowledging the work I built off in this research.

The photograph on the left shows me planting a bean sprout at Minjimendan. Looking at this seemingly simple image reveals a long chain of work. The photograph was taken by Amina Lalor, a colleague and friend who introduced me to Andrew and Minjimendan. The planting bed was dug out, shaped, and covered with soil by Andrew and volunteers. The bean plant was supported in its early days in a greenhouse by volunteers. Before that, the bean itself was harvested, nurtured, and prepared for planting by Andrew. Andrew might defer to the Elders from whom he learned, or the generations of stewards who cultivated this bean for centuries. I use this analogy to highlight the core lesson I've gleaned from this process. It is a basic appreciation for the web of relations which constitute space and land, and the interconnected ways people gather on it, work the land, and make plans for it. It is a deep gratitude for the pre-existing interpersonal relationships I've built off to bring me to this understanding. It is also a challenge to myself to base future work on nurturing relationships with all manner of communities: human, animal, and plant alike.

To any readers, and to everyone who made these realizations possible, thank you.

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